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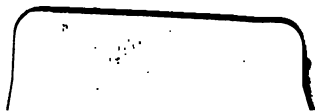
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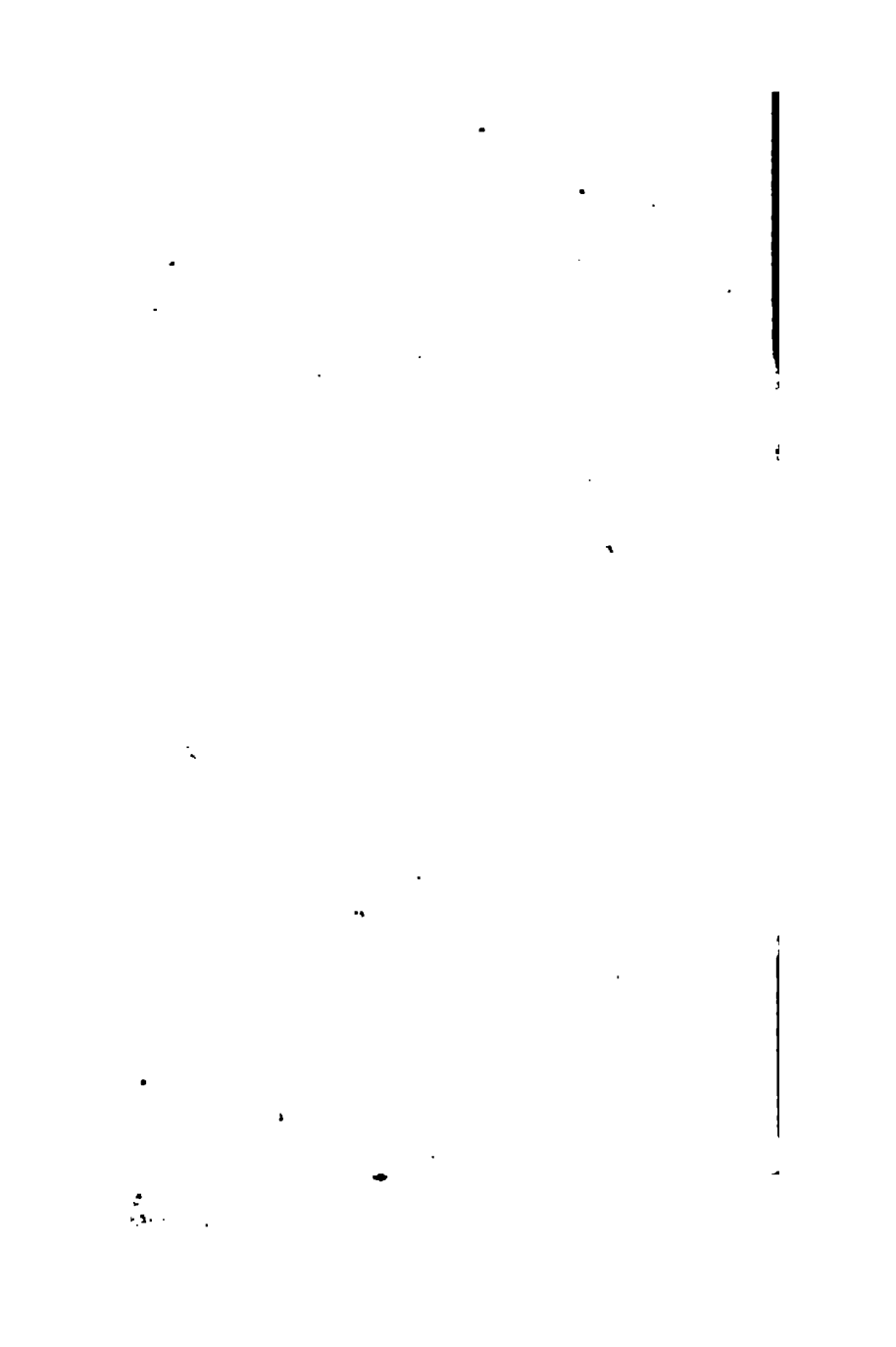
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A  
PLAIN COMMENTARY  
ON  
**The Four Holy Gospels,**

INTENDED CHIEFLY  
FOR DEVOTIONAL READING.

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VOL. I.—PART II.  
ST. MATTHEW.  
CHAPTERS XIV.—XXVIII.

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ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK  
THEREIN; AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

*JEREMIAH VI. 16.*

GRANT, O LORD, THAT IN READING THY WORD, I MAY NEVER  
PREFER MY OWN SENTIMENTS BEFORE THOSE OF THE CHURCH  
IN THE PURELY ANCIENT TIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

*Bishop Wilson.*

LONDON,  
JOHN HENRY PARKER.

M DCCC LV.

*101. d. 254.*





## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*1 Herod's opinion of CHRIST. 3 Wherefore John Baptist was be-headed. 13 JESUS departeth into a desert place: 15 where He feedeth five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. 22 He walketh on the sea to His Disciples: 34 and landing at Gennesaret, healeth the sick by the touch of the hem of His garment.*

XIV. AT that time Herod the tetrarch <sup>1</sup> heard of the fame of JESUS, and said unto <sup>2</sup> his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

At the "time" alluded to, our SAVIOUR was performing His third great Ministerial Circuit of Galilee; and the fame of His Miracles is found to have reached the ears of the Tetrarch. Herod had very recently been guilty of the murder of St. John Baptist,—under circumstances which the Evangelist proceeds to relate, but which will be found more fully given in St. Mark's Gospel, chap. vi. 17 to 29. That one who professed to disbelieve in the Resurrection, and the wonders

of the unseen World<sup>a</sup>, should have been suddenly betrayed into the opinion here recorded, will be felt to be a most remarkable and instructive circumstance. Herod confesses even that the body which is "sown in weakness" is to be "raised in power<sup>b</sup>;" for John Baptist, who in his life-time did no miracles<sup>c</sup>, is yet supposed by him to be the author of all "the mighty works" which CHRIST Himself performed.

- 3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

Elias rebukes Herod and Herodias with the same authority, which he had formerly exerted over Ahab and Jezebel<sup>d</sup>. St. Mark relates that Herodias "had a quarrel" against John Baptist in consequence, and would have slain him; but that her paramour protected the stern preacher, and preserved his life<sup>e</sup>. It would seem from what follows that there came a day when he would have complied with her wishes had he dared; but was deterred from doing so by prudential considerations.

- 5 And when he would have put him to

<sup>a</sup> Herod was a Sadducee. Compare St. Matth. xvi. 6 with St. Mark viii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 43.

<sup>c</sup> St. John x. 41.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Kings xxi.

<sup>e</sup> St. Mark vi. 20,—where see the note.

death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's 6 birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod :

“ Before *them* :”—that is, before Herod's “ lords, high Captains, and chief estates of Galilee,” to whom the Tetrarch had “ made a Supper,”—as St. Mark relates<sup>f</sup>. To dance before such a company was an unmaidenly act ; and must have been regarded by all present as immodest,—even as immoral.

A very ancient English Writer, after pointing out that only two such celebrations of a birthday are recorded in Scripture, (*that* namely, of Pharaoh, and the present instance,) and further, that *either* was made an occasion of bloodshed<sup>g</sup>,—suggests that men ought rather to observe the day of their Birth with chaste and sober joy, than with feasting and luxury.

whereupon he promised with an oath to 7 give her whatsoever she would ask. And 8 she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

This does not mean that Salome, (the daughter,) had been instructed *beforehand* by Herodias ; for that wicked woman cannot have foreseen the in-

<sup>f</sup> St. Mark vi. 21.

<sup>g</sup> Genesis xl. 20 to 22.

fatuation of her paramour. The Evangelist does but intend to say that before the maiden exacted of the King the fulfilment of his promise, "she went forth, and said unto her Mother, What shall I ask?"—as St. Mark<sup>h</sup>, writing afterwards, will be found in this place to explain. The Reader is requested to refer to the note on the passage of St. Mark last cited, where some remarks are offered on the conduct of Herodias, which cannot be here repeated.

- 9 And the King was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *her*.

See the note on St. Mark vi. 26.

- 10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

This then was the end of the greatest who had ever been born of woman! Imprisoned at the end of a Ministry of a single year's duration, in order to gratify the malice of a lustful woman: murdered, after two years of confinement, at the bidding of a dancing girl! Such are the instruments by which ALMIGHTY GOD does not disdain to work out the wondrous ends of His Providence! An old writer remarks,—“Let each infer from this what *they* shall suffer, whom He rejects; if He allows such a fate to befall those whom He loves.”

<sup>h</sup> chap. vi. 24.

And his head was brought in a charger, 11 and given to the damsel: and she brought *it* to her mother. And His disciples came, 12 and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told JESUS.

They found Him at Capernaum. He had, in fact, now returned from one of His great Ministerial Journeys: His Apostles also, from theirs,—the first which they had taken alone. At Capernaum they all met. It was the Spring of the year,—just twelve months before the Crucifixion<sup>1</sup>.

The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark vi. 28, 29, 30, for several additional remarks.

When JESUS heard *of it*, He departed 13 thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard *thereof*, they followed Him on foot out of the cities.

St. Matthew seems to connect our LORD's crossing the Lake with the dismal tidings brought Him by the Disciples of John. The two later Gospels convey a somewhat different notion of the transaction. See St. Mark vi. 30, 31, 32, and the notes there: also, St. Luke ix. 10. The little vessel had now reached the Western side of the Sea of Galilee:

And JESUS went forth, and saw a great 14

<sup>1</sup> See St. John vi. 4, and the note there.

multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.

The Reader is again referred to the later Gospel. In the note on St. Mark vi. 34 some remarks will be found on the glorious picture of Ministerial zeal here exhibited.

- 15 And when it was evening, His Disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the vil-  
16 lages, and buy themselves victuals. But JESUS said unto them, They need not de-  
17 part; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

All this will be found exhibited, with many beautiful differences, in St. John's Gospel,—chap. vi. 5 to 9; where the Reader is requested to read the notes . . . . Consider how magnificently many of the events recorded concerning our Blessed SAVIOUR cast their shadows far back into the past! Fifteen hundred years before the present transaction, Moses had said,—“The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and Thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered toge-

ther for them, to suffice them<sup>k</sup>?" . . . Seven centuries more elapse, and Elisha delivers a similar injunction to his Servitor, — "Give unto the people, that they may eat." To which, the other makes answer,—"What, should I set this," (meaning twenty loaves of barley,) "before an hundred men<sup>l</sup>?"

For some observations on the 15th and 16th verses, the Reader is referred to the Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel,—chap. vi. 36, 37, 38.—The Beloved Disciple proceeds, — "And JESUS said, Make the men sit down<sup>m</sup>." From the present Gospel we learn that He prefaced that command by another :

He said, Bring them hither to Me. 18

This command was preliminary to an act concerning which a few words will be found offered in the notes on St. Luke ix. 16.

And He commanded the multitude to sit 19  
down on the grass,

"On the *green* grass," says St. Mark<sup>n</sup>; and St. John observes that "there was much grass in the place<sup>o</sup>."

St. Mark<sup>p</sup> and St. Luke<sup>q</sup> relate that they were distributed about 'by companies,'—as the several Churches of the World are: yet, all *one* great

<sup>k</sup> Numbers xi. 21, 22.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Kings iv. 42, 43.

<sup>m</sup> St. John vi. 10.

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark vi. 39: where see the note.

<sup>o</sup> St. John vi. 10.

<sup>p</sup> St. Mark vi. 39.

<sup>q</sup> Luke ix. 14.



company;—partakers all, of one and the same heavenly food,—all ministered to by the same Apostles,—all bound by the same tie to the same Divine Master!

and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *His* Disciples, and the Disciples to the multitude.

Impressed by the Hands of the CREATOR with a new property of growth and increase, the five barley loaves and two small fishes, when restored to the appointed instruments and channels of the Divine Bounty, were found to grow in their hands in exact proportion to the necessities of the multitude\*. A portion of bread was no sooner broken off for distribution, than it became instantly replaced by a marvellous increase in the same part; and this went on, till the needs of all that vast assembly had been supplied. As it follows,—

- 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

“And of the fishes,”—as St. Mark adds, (chap. vi. 43, where see the note.) . . . . So that the quantity of bread which remained after the meal, far exceeded the original supply! “An apt symbol,

\* See the latter part of the note on St. John vi. 11.

this," (says a living Writer,) "of the Love which exhausts not itself by loving; but, after all its outgoings upon others, itself abides far richer than it would have done but for these. Such a multiplying there ever is in a true dispensing."—Bishop Sanderson has a remark to the same effect,—quoted in the note upon St. Mark vi. 43: and Archbishop Sandys says,—“So it is with all the graces and gifts of God. They grow in the hands of him that spendeth; and in the coffers of him that saveth, they waste.”

Several additional suggestions on this mysterious transaction, (for it is doubtless as full of mystery as of marvel,) will be found in the note on St. John vi. 13. The Reader is also referred to the Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel for some observations on the present verse, which is almost repeated by St. Luke in chap. ix. 17.

And they that had eaten were about five 21 thousand men, beside women and children.

So that the number of those who partook of His Royal Bounty will have amounted, in all, nearer to *ten* thousand than to *five*. See more in the note on St. John vi. 10; as well as on St. Mark vi. 44.

And straightway Jesus constrained His 22 Disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

To "send the multitudes away" was evidently more than a mere dismissal, as our LORD conducted it. There appears to have been some solemnity attaching to the act,—whether in the way of Prayer or Benediction. The Disciples are found to have been unwilling to leave their Divine Master on this occasion, as will be found remarked elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. One reason why He constrained them to depart is supplied by the history of the present transaction, as given by St. John; from whose account it is gathered that our LORD must have already detected a growing disposition on the part of the multitude "*to make Him a King*." Very unequal to such a trial of their meekness and humility must the ardent followers of MESSIAH, at this time, have proved: filled as they are known to have been, till a much later period, with hopes of an earthly Kingdom and a temporal Prince.

- 3 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.

The Reader is referred to some remarks which have been already offered on this place of Scripture, in the notes on St. Mark vi. 46, 47.

- 4 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

<sup>1</sup> See the note on St. Mark vi. 45.

\* St. John vi. 15.

The last time *that* little vessel had been similarly endangered, its inmates had been blessed by the visible presence of their LORD. Thus had He trained them for the severer trial which now awaited them.

And here it would be wrong to overlook the rare example of strenuous obedience set us by these holy men. Neither the fruitlessness of the task in which they were engaged, (for they had been all night rowing four or five miles<sup>\*</sup>;) nor the terrors of the storm, (which were evidently great;) nor the severe labour in which they were actually engaged, (for "He saw them *toiling* in rowing<sup>†</sup>;" ) nor yet their strong desire to be with CHRIST, (for He had "constrained His Disciples to get into the ship,")—none of these things induced them to disobey His order that they should "go before Him unto the other side."

And in the fourth watch of the night <sup>25</sup> JESUS went unto them, walking on the sea.

It was now between three and six o'clock in the morning. Thus had our LORD by distress and danger inspired His Apostles with a more eager desire for His presence; while doubtless the events of the past day were brought before their memory in the liveliest manner by their sense of desertion, and consciousness of present need. "He cometh unto them," (St. Mark says,) "walking upon the

\* St. John vi. 19.

† St. Mark vi. 48.

sea; *and would have passed by them.*" See St. Mark vi. 48, and the notes there.

- 26 And when the Disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

For it is ever thus. The trial increases, when it is about to be altogether removed: the conflict grows hotter, as it draws towards a close: the Night is darkest immediately before the dawn. When Calamity seems to have reached the lowest ebb, then is Relief ever most near at hand . . . . Consider, that it was not till "Abraham stretched forth his hand, and *took the knife to slay his son*," that "the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven." *Then*, and not before, was the ram discovered, "caught in a thicket by his horns;"—not till *then* did God, "because He could swear by no greater, swear by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee!" . . . "The water was spent in the bottle,"—the child had been cast "under one of the shrubs,"—Hagar had sat down expecting the death of the child,—had lifted up her voice, and wept: all this had happened, ere the reprieve came forth from God . . . Consider, above all, the history which is recalled by such passages as the following:—St. John xx. 11 to 17: St. Luke xxiv. 36 to 43.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xxii. 10.

<sup>x</sup> Compare Hebrews vi. 13, 14, with Gen. xxii. 16, 17.

<sup>y</sup> Gen. xxi. 15 to 17.

The Reader is referred to the note on St. Mark i. 14, for a remark which applies equally to the present occasion.

But straightway JESUS spake unto them, 27 saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

And so, doubtless, He speaks to all whom He visits with affliction, and severe trials of their Faith. Under bereavement, and every other calamity,—“It is I,” He says: “be not afraid.”

The miracle which follows is peculiar to the present Gospel. St. Mark passes it over in silence\*, for a reason already suggested in the note prefixed to his Gospel.

And Peter answered Him and said, LORD, 28 if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.

This was, virtually, a glorious acknowledgment of our LORD's Divine Power and Godhead. He knew that CHRIST could, if He pleased, suspend the Laws of Nature, and make the unsteady waves stable as a rock beneath his feet. Accordingly, he claimed such a confirmation of the words “It is I,” as only CHRIST could furnish. Yet was the request made in no vain-glorious spirit, but in love. His request is not that he may be enabled to walk upon the waves: his prayer to CHRIST is, “*Bid me come unto Thee.*”

\* St. Mark vi. 50, 51.

And such a desire *to be with* CHRIST, St. Peter often displayed. He professed his readiness to go with Him, “both into prison, and to death<sup>a</sup>.” He followed Him into the High-priest’s Palace<sup>b</sup>. Into the Sepulchre he hastened, while St. John reverently halted at the entrance<sup>c</sup>: and he cast himself into the sea, to come to his LORD, when he beheld Him standing on the shore of the Lake, after His Resurrection<sup>d</sup>.

## 29 And He said, Come.

“If Thou be the SON of GOD,” (said the Tempter,) “command that these stones be made bread<sup>e</sup>!” “If Thou be the SON of GOD,” (exclaimed the blaspheming Jews,) “come down from the cross<sup>f</sup>!” “If Thou be CHRIST,” (cried the malefactor who was crucified with Him,) “save Thyself and us<sup>g</sup>!” “LORD, if it be Thou,” (answered Peter,) “bid me come unto Thee.” All four required a sign: all four chose what the sign should be: but the first three, asked in Unbelief,—the last, asked in Faith. The words were similar in every instance; but the spirit in which they were spoken was wholly different: whence it happened that silence or a rebuke followed in the case of *those*,—a gracious invitation, in the case of St. Peter. And this recalls a remark which was offered on St. Luke i. 20.

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xxii. 33.

<sup>b</sup> St. Matth. xxvi. 58: St. Mark xiv. 54: St. Luke xxii. 54: St. John xviii. 16.

<sup>c</sup> St. John xx. 6, &c.

<sup>d</sup> St. John xxi. 7.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matthew iv. 3.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matthew xxvii. 40.

<sup>g</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 39.

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to JESUS.

O marvel! the first and the last of mortal men who was ever permitted to do the like! He descended the ship's side in perfect faith. He planted his foot on the reeling billow, as if it had been a rock,—and it sustained him! So literally true proved those words of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, —“He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also<sup>h</sup>!”

The ancients often remind us of the importance of miracles like this, not only “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction<sup>i</sup>,” to the early Church, but for confirming the Faith of the Apostles themselves. If Peter,—one of their number,—may walk upon the water at God's bidding, they need entertain no doubt that CHRIST Himself is “very man,” because they see Him crossing the Lake as if it had been “a sea of glass like unto crystal<sup>k</sup>.”

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he 30 was afraid: and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, LORD, save me.

Compare the forwardness of the same Peter, at a subsequent period, to profess readiness to follow CHRIST; yet failing and falling away in the hour

<sup>h</sup> St. John xiv. 12.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>k</sup> Rev. iv. 6.



of severest trial<sup>1</sup>. *Then*, it was by a *look* that CHRIST saved him<sup>m</sup>. On *this* occasion, we find that He sustained His Disciple with His Hand.

- 31 And immediately JESUS stretched forth *His* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Observe, that our SAVIOUR rebukes not the waves, nor the wind,—but *him*: and yet, not *him* for “coming,”—but for “*doubting*.” Moreover, the doubt is now passed: (“Wherefore *didst thou* doubt?”) Already does Peter stand firmly upon the water!

The act, and the occasion of it, find a striking parallel in what occurred with respect to the Storm on the Lake. See St. Matthew viii. 26, and the note there. As long as Peter had Faith, he was secure: when he began to doubt, he began to sink;—and but for the out-stretched Hand, and sustaining Arm of CHRIST, he would have perished. Hence the Church bids us pray evermore that in all the “dangers and adversities” which may befall *us* while passing “the waves of this troublesome world,” the Almighty and Everlasting One would “*stretch forth His Right Hand to help and defend us*”<sup>n</sup>.

“But,” (remarks an ancient Archbishop), “as

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxii. 33: St. John xiii. 37.    <sup>m</sup> St. Luke xxii. 61.

<sup>n</sup> Collect for the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Compare the Collect for the Third Sunday in Lent.

the Mother bears on her wings, and brings back to the nest her chick which has left the nest before its time, and has fallen, so did CHRIST." . . . .  
 "When I said, My foot slippeth ; Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up°!"

And when they were come into the ship, 32 the wind ceased.

"*The Wind*,"—which had so terrified St. Peter, (see verse 30,) as to cause his faith to fail. *This* time, instead of silencing the storm, our SAVIOUR taught St. Peter,—and thereby, the rest of the Apostles,—that their safety depended upon being *with Him*. Till He had re-entered the ship, the storm ceased not.

Then they that were in the ship came and 33 worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the SON of God.

They seem to have had a faint perception of the Divine Nature of Him with whom they had to do\*; —"who treadeth upon the waves†." "Thou art the SON of God!"—for "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known‡."

The ancient writers abound in beautiful remarks on this miracle. "In St. Peter," (says

° Ps. xciv. 18.

\* For the difference between this Confession of Faith, and that other famous Confession recorded of St. Peter, see the note on St. Matth. xvi. 16.

† Job ix. 8.

‡ Ps. lxxvii. 19.

one,) "are figured both the strong and the weak : the strong, in that he walked upon the water : the weak, in that he doubted. Dost thou love God ? Thou walkest on the sea. Dost thou love the world ? It swallows thee up<sup>r</sup>."

"We need not wonder," (remarks another,) "that the wind ceased when the LORD had entered into the boat ; for, in whatsoever heart the LORD is present by grace, there all wars cease<sup>s</sup>."—A third says,—“By this entrance of CHRIST into the boat, and the calm of the wind and the sea thereupon, is pointed out the eternal peace of the Church ; and *that* rest which shall be, after His future return in glory. Rightly do the Disciples cry out in wonder, ‘Truly Thou art the SON of God ;’ for *then* shall He be confessed openly by all, in whom, now, some do not believe<sup>t</sup>.”—“It is here conveyed to us,” (writes the Great Father of the West,) “that His Glory will then be made manifest ; seeing that now, they who walk by faith, see it only in a figure.”

- 34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

This was the name of the district west of the Lake, where Capernaum,—in the direction of which city our LORD had directed His Apostles to proceed<sup>u</sup>,—stood.

<sup>r</sup> Augustine.

<sup>s</sup> Rabanus.

<sup>t</sup> Hilary.

<sup>u</sup> St. Mark vi. 45 ; St. John vi. 17. See also above, ver. 22.

And when the men of that place had 35 knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased :

St. Mark says, that "*they ran* through that whole region round about ; and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was." "Afflictions," (remarks an English bishop,) "like goads in our side, troublesome as they are; yet serve to quicken us in our work, and make us mend our pace to Heaven".—The Evangelist proceeds, "and whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets":

and besought Him that they might only 36 touch the hem of His garment : and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Doubt not that the people of those parts had learned from the Woman who had been afflicted with a bloody issue, that healing virtue flowed abundantly from the very robes of CHRIST !

But a higher subject for meditation is supplied by a comparison of this place with what is prophetically said of CHRIST's garments, in the 8th verse of the 45th Psalm. In explanation of which passage, Bishop Horsley remarks,—“The High-priest of the Jews was not sprinkled with a few scanty drops of the perfume of the Sanctuary ; but his

▼ Bp. Hopkins.

▼ St. Mark vi. 55, 56.

person was so bedewed with it, that it literally ran down from his beard *to the skirts of his garments*<sup>x</sup>. The High-priest of the Jews, in his robes of office, was in this, and in every circumstance, the living type of our Great High-Priest: . . . . the perfumed garments being typical,—first, of the graces and virtues of the Redeemer Himself, in His human character; secondly, of whatever is refreshing, encouraging, consoling, and cheering in the external ministration of the Word; and thirdly, of the internal comforts of the HOLY SPIRIT.”

## The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

<sup>x</sup> Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

3 CHRIST *reproveth the Scribes and Pharisees for transgressing GOD's Commandments through their own Traditions : 11 teacheth how that which goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man. 21 He healeth the Daughter of the Woman of Canaan, 30 and other great multitudes : 32 and with seven loaves and a few little fishes feedeth four thousand men, beside women and children.*

XV. THEN came to JESUS Scribes and 1 Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Thy Disciples transgress the Tradi- 2 tion of the Elders ? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

These two verses should be compared with the first eight of St. Mark vii,—where they will be found expanded in a very interesting manner.

“The fame of Jesus had now become so great as to attract the particular notice of the most learned men of the nation, the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem ; who appear to have thought it worth while to come from thence into Galilee, to watch His proceedings.” Take notice that in reply to the inquiry of these Hypocrites why *the Disciples*

transgressed *the Tradition of the Elders*,—our LORD demands of them why, by that very Tradition of theirs, *themselves* transgressed the *Commandment of GOD*; guarded as it was by that awful injunction,—“Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it<sup>a</sup>.” As it follows,—

3 But He answered and said unto them,  
Why do ye also transgress the Command-  
4 ment of God by your Tradition? For God  
commanded, saying, Honour thy Father and  
Mother: and, He that curseth Father or  
Mother let him die the death.

The former of these two places of Scripture will be found in Exodus xx. 12 and Deut. v. 16: the latter, in Exodus xxi. 17 and Levit. xx. 9.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his*  
Father or *his* Mother, *It is* a gift, by what-  
6 soever thou mightest be profited by me: and  
honour not his Father or his Mother, *he shall*  
*be free*. Thus have ye made the Command-  
ment of God of none effect by your Tra-  
dition.

Rather,—“But ye say, If any one says to his Father or to his Mother, the thing whereby I might have benefited you is an Offering [dedi-

<sup>a</sup> Deut. iv. 2: with which compare Deut. xii. 32; and see Rev. xxii. 18.

cated to God,—he is bound to keep his vow :] and need not honour his Father or his Mother.” For an explanation of this, the reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark vii. 13.

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy 7 of you, saying, This people draweth nigh 8 unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with *their* lips ; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, 9 teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of men.

The quotation is from Isaiah xxix. 13 : and the surprising discovery is made that these words, spoken more than seven hundred years before, had a prophetical application to the Jews of our SAVIOUR'S Day, no less than to the men who lived in the time of the Prophet. As it is said in verse 7,—“ Well did Esaias prophesy *of you*.”

And He called the multitude, and said 10 unto them, Hear, and understand :

He turns away from the stiff-necked Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, whom He had put to silence ; and calls the multitude to Him,—arousing their attention to the Doctrine which He was about to deliver, with the words,—“ Hear and understand :”—

Not that which goeth into the mouth de- 11



fileth a man ; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

The truth which He here so briefly delivered, will be found expanded in verses 17 to 20: concerning which, see the note on St. Mark vii. 16.

- 12 Then came His Disciples, and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying ?

Consider the note on verse 10.—For the “offence” which our LORD’s words were to the Pharisees, see what has been said on St. Matth. xi. 6.

- 13 But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly FATHER hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

The reference is to *Doctrine*,—which is often spoken of in Scripture under a similar image ; as in the Parable of the Sower. “What He intends, then, by a plant not planted of His FATHER,” says an ancient Archbishop, “is, *that* Tradition of men, under cover of which the Law had been transgressed.”

- 14 Let them alone : they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.
- 15 Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this Parable.
- 16 And JESUS said, Are ye also yet without understanding ? Do not ye yet understand,

that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies :

Which enumeration will be perceived, in at least five particulars, to follow the order of the Commandments of the Second Table. Some remarks will be found in the note on St. Mark vii. 21 and 22, on this instructive passage.

these are *the things* which defile a man : 20 but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

This weighty Discourse ended, an incident of the most affecting beauty and interest follows :—

Then Jesus went thence, and departed 21 into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, 22 behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O LORD, *Thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a 23 word.

“A woman of Canaan!”—so that there were even yet lingering in the land, (“*The Land of*”

*Canaan*<sup>b</sup>,") traces of its occupants in the days of Abraham<sup>c</sup>. This woman was also living within the territory of the ancient people; for "the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon<sup>d</sup>,"—which City was mentioned in ver. 21; and she "came out of the same coasts." It had been commanded the Israelites, in the days of Moses, indeed,—“Of the Cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth<sup>e</sup> :”—but they disobeyed God<sup>f</sup>. “And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. . . . Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of . . . Zidon; . . . but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the Land, for they did not drive them out<sup>g</sup>.”—In St. Mark’s Gospel\*, this woman is called “a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation.” Her passionate cry to the *Son of David*, by the way, is not there recorded, but only what took place in the House; whither our SAVIOUR betook Himself,—partly, as it would seem, in order to escape this Woman’s importunity.

Take notice how the Mother, asking Health for her Child, feels that she is asking a favour for herself: — “Have mercy,” she says, “*on me.*” And so, lower down, in verse 25. With which saying

<sup>b</sup> Numbers xxxiv. 2.

<sup>c</sup> See Genesis xii. 6, and xiii. 7.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. x. 19.

<sup>e</sup> Deut. xx. 16.

<sup>f</sup> See Psalm cvi. 34 to 41.

<sup>g</sup> Judges i. 28, 31, 32. Compare Joshua xvii. 12, 13: also xvi. 10.

\* St. Mark vii. 26,—where see the note.

of hers, compare the language of the Father of the lunatic child, in St. Mark ix. 22.

“Strange!” (remarks a good man,) “that a miserable suppliant should cry and sue, while the God of Mercy is speechless. What! Is the fountain of Mercy dried up? We have often found cause to wonder at the SAVIOUR’S words; but never till now at His silence.”

And his Disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

What they meant by “Send her away,”—was “Grant her her petition:” whence it follows,—

But He answered and said, I am not sent<sup>24</sup> but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

In strict conformity with which declaration, He had commanded the Twelve,—“Go not into the way of the Gentiles; . . . but go rather to *the lost sheep of the House of Israel*<sup>h</sup>.” Our LORD had probably not overstepped the confines of the Holy Land, but had come into “the coasts,” or “borders,” of Tyre and Sidon; and this Woman had *come* “out of the same coasts,” to the place where He was.

Concerning delayed answers to Prayer, the Reader is referred to what has been written on St. Matthew vii. 8. The line of conduct pursued by our LORD towards this poor supplicant is doubt-

<sup>h</sup> St. Matthew x. 6.

less meant to be full of Heavenly teaching to ourselves. Take notice, then, how He is pleased to try her Faith; and, for a season, to “make as though He heard not!”

- 25 Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, LORD, help me.

The scene, as already hinted (at the end of the note on verse 22,)—and as more fully explained in the note on St. Mark vii. 26,—is no longer the road-side; but is here changed to the interior of the House whither our LORD had withdrawn. Take notice how this pious creature perseveres in the language of her former petition: “LORD, help me.” It is, (says an ancient Writer,) “because the affliction of the Daughter is the affliction of the Mother.”

- 26 But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast *it* to dogs.

*Now*, He answers: for ‘He speaks to us when we worship,’—silent till then, as though He heard not.

So, she cries loudly after Him, (ver. 22,) and He makes no reply. The Disciples intercede for her, (ver. 24,) and they are refused. She petitions for herself, (ver. 25,) and she meets with a repulse. Yet, in spite of all, she perseveres! As it follows,—

- 27 And she said, Truth, LORD: yet the dogs

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxviii. 1.

eat of the crumbs which fall from their Masters' table.

Her reply is as bold as it is beautiful. She retorts upon her LORD ;—wielding against Him, in her loving earnestness, the very weapon which was to have overcome her : entangling Him in His own language, by proving that the image which He had employed, made unanswerably in favour of her suit. She seems to say, with the patriarch of old,—“ I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me !” And forget not that Jacob and she *wrestled with the self-same Person* ; even with the eternal SON : that Jacob, no less than the Woman of Canaan, “ wept and made supplication unto Him <sup>k</sup>.”

See more in the note on St. Mark vii. 28. “ Learn also, hence, that CHRIST puts the strongest Faith of His own children upon the severest trials. The Trial had never been so sharp, if her Faith had not been so strong. Usually, where God gives much grace, He tries grace much.” . . . “ For,” (as it is written,) “ unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more <sup>l</sup>.”

Then JESUS answered and said unto her, 28  
O woman, great is thy Faith :

<sup>j</sup> Genesis xxxii. 26 : concerning which mysterious wrestling take notice of what is said by the prophet Hosea xii. 3, 4.

<sup>k</sup> Hosea xii. 4. For it is admitted by Divines that in the form of a created Angel, it was none other than the Second Person in the Blessed TRINITY who appeared to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Manoah's wife, &c.

<sup>l</sup> St. Luke xii. 48.

“Great is thy Importunity,”—some would have said: others,—“Great is thy Humility.” But our SAVIOUR says, “Great is thy *Faith*.” He sees the toot: we the branches. The Reader is referred to the last note on St. Luke vii.

A pious writer points out that she does as our SAVIOUR CHRIST did, when He wrought out our Salvation with “prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears<sup>m</sup>:” “and now, beholding Himself, as it were, in this woman, and seeing though not the same, yet the like fervour and perseverance as His, He approves it, as a piece of His own coin, and sets His impress upon it.”

be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her Daughter was made whole from that very hour.

“Learn hence, that nothing is so pleasing unto CHRIST, as to see His people following Him with Faith and Importunity, when He seems to withdraw from them.”

“We may observe that we have *three* ascending degrees of Faith, manifesting itself in the breaking through of hindrances, which would keep from CHRIST: in the Paralytic<sup>n</sup>,—the Blind men at Jericho<sup>o</sup>,—and this Woman of Canaan. The Paralytic broke through the outward hindrance of things merely external: blind Bartimæus through the hindrance opposed by his fellow men: and this woman, more heroically than all, through

<sup>m</sup> Hebrews v. 7.

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark ii. 4.

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark x. 48.

apparent hindrance even from CHRIST Himself. These, in their seeming weakness, were the three mighty ones, not of David, but of David's Son; who broke through the hosts of the enemy, until they could draw living water from the Well of Salvation<sup>p</sup>." So far Mr. Trench.

Such, then, is the Almightyness of Faith,—(which, as we know, can move Mountains<sup>q</sup>;) and such the Almightyness of Prayer! For, (as our LORD Himself has declared,) "Every one that asketh, *receiveth*; and he that seeketh, *findeth*; and to him that knocketh, *it shall be opened*." *Delay*, on the part of God, is no token of *Denial*. He will have us *importunate*; and hath delivered more than one parable "to this end,—that men ought always to pray, and not to faint<sup>r</sup>." See what has been already written on this subject, in the notes on St. Matthew vii. 7 and 8.

For a few further remarks, see the note on St. Mark vii. 29: and observe how this idolatrous "woman of Canaan," and the Gentile Centurion, become patterns of Faith to the Children of the Kingdom<sup>t</sup>! Yet should it be observed that even *her* exceeding Faith procured for her no exemption from fleshly trials. The heaviest of afflictions is therefore no *proof* of the Divine displeasure. Rather let us learn what is the true office of Di-

<sup>p</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 16.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 2; where St. Paul alludes to the words of CHRIST recorded in St. Matthew xvii. 20.

<sup>r</sup> St. Matthew vii. 8.    <sup>s</sup> St. Luke xviii. 1 to 8, and xi. 5 to 10.

<sup>t</sup> Compare St. Matthew viii. 10, with the present place.



vine chastisement from the present History; duly noting how it may be made to “work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory<sup>u</sup>.”

- 29 And JESUS departed from thence, and came nigh unto the Sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

Our SAVIOUR is found to have been at this time on the Eastern side of the Lake; for St. Mark says that, “departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came . . . . through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis<sup>v</sup>.”

- 30 And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at JESUS’ feet; and He  
31 healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

One case of Healing which happened at this time is *specified* by St. Mark; the miraculous cure, namely, which was performed on “one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech<sup>x</sup>.” The *unmeasured* astonishment of the people at these wondrous displays of supernatural power is also noticed by the second Evangelist.

<sup>u</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17.    <sup>v</sup> St. Mark vii. 31.    <sup>x</sup> St. Mark vii. 32.

Then JESUS called His Disciples *unto Him*, 32 and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat :

“ After two days He will revive us : *in the third day* He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight,”—says the prophet<sup>7</sup>. Take notice that it is “ *Compassion*” which He feels towards the multitude ; the same sentiment which, in the ancient Scriptures also, is so affectingly ascribed to God : as in Isaiah xlix. 15 : Jeremiah xii. 15 : Micah vii. 19. This is what He felt towards the untended sheep of His pasture<sup>2</sup>,—towards those who brought their sick to Him for cure<sup>3</sup>,—towards the Leper<sup>b</sup>, towards the blind men at Jericho<sup>c</sup>,—towards the Demoniac of Gadara<sup>d</sup>,—and towards the widow of Nain<sup>e</sup>. ‘ Compassion ’ is ascribed also, in certain of the parables, to those who represent CHRIST,—as in St. Matth. xviii. 33 : in St. Luke x. 33 ; and in xv. 20. Whence it happens that St. Peter, exhorting Christians to the imitation of CHRIST, says,—“ Be ye all of one mind, *having compassion* one of another<sup>f</sup>.”

and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Doubtless, both miracles of feeding,—(*that* performed for the relief of the Five Thousand, and

<sup>7</sup> Hosea vi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matth. ix. 36.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xiv. 14.

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark i. 41.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matth. xx. 34.

<sup>d</sup> St. Mark v. 19.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke vii. 13.

<sup>f</sup> 1 St. Peter iii. 8.

*this* for the relief of the Four,)—were typical of the Sacramental Feast, in which the True Bread is given to souls famishing in this World's Wilderness, "*lest they faint in the way!*"—See more in the notes on St. John vi. 4.

- 33 And His Disciples say unto Him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

On reading this, we are ready enough,—*too* ready, it may be,—to exclaim at the slowness of heart which could so soon forget how the same LORD had so recently "spread a table for them" in the same Wilderness. But are we not hereby reminded of our own conduct in every fresh case of doubt, difficulty, and danger? Are not the former mercies forgot; and the Providence and Power, of which we have experienced so many proofs, altogether overlooked and mistrusted? It hath ever been, it will ever be, thus. "He smote the stony Rock indeed, that the water gushed out, and the streams flowed withal: but can He give bread also, or provide flesh for His people?"

In the meantime, two typical passages in Old Testament History may not here be overlooked. The first will be found in Numbers xi. 22,—where Moses replies to the ALMIGHTY much in the spirit of the Apostles on the present occasion. The second occurs in 2 Kings iv. 43, where Elisha's servitor expresses perplexity at having to feed an hundred men with twenty barley loaves.

8 Psalm lxxviii. 21.

And JESUS saith unto them, How many 34  
loaves have ye ? And they said, Seven, and  
a few little fishes.

The purpose of this questioning was doubtless  
to awaken in the Disciples a thorough sense of  
their need, and to call their attention to the Mira-  
cle which He was about to perform.

"Bread," and "Fish !"—the materials of the  
former Miracle of feeding ; and the food mentioned  
in St. Matthew vii. 9, and 10 : St. Luke xi. 11. It  
was with such fare also that CHRIST received the  
Seven Apostles, after His Resurrection,—as St.  
John records in the 9<sup>th</sup>. verse of his last Chapter.

And He commanded the multitude to sit 35  
down on the ground. And He took the 36  
seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks,  
and brake *them*, and gave to His Disciples,  
and the Disciples to the multitude. And 37  
they did all eat, and were filled : and they  
took up of the broken *meat* that was left,  
seven baskets full. And they that did eat 38  
were four thousand men, beside women and  
children.

Most of the remarks which the present won-  
drous narrative suggests, have been already offered  
in connexion with the miraculous feeding of the  
Five Thousand ; to which the foregoing History  
bears so striking and singular a resemblance. The

Reader is therefore referred to the notes on St. Matthew xiv. 15 to 21 : St. Mark vi. 35 to 44 : St. Luke ix. 12 to 17 : and St. John vi. 3 to 14.

Concerning the present Miracle, several additional remarks will be found in the notes on St. Mark viii. 1 to 9.

39 And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

Or, as it is in St. Mark's Gospel, "the parts of Dalmanutha<sup>h</sup>,"—the district, namely, to the South of Capernaum, and therefore on the Western shore of the Lake.

The great Father of the West has an admirable remark on all that has gone before:—"Surely," he says, "it will not be out of place to suggest upon this Miracle, that if any of the Evangelists who had not given the Miracle of the Five Loaves had related this of the Seven Loaves, he would have been supposed to have contradicted the rest. But because those who have related the one, have also related the other, no one is puzzled; but it is understood at once that they were two separate Miracles. This we have pointed out, in order that whenever any thing is found done by the LORD wherein the accounts of any two Evangelists seem irreconcilable, we may understand them as two distinct occurrences; of which *one* is related by one Evangelist, and *one* by another."

<sup>h</sup> St. Mark viii. 10.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

1 *The Pharisees require a sign.* 6 JESUS warneth His Disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. 13 *The people's opinion of CHRIST,* 16 and Peter's confession of Him. 21 JESUS foresheweth His Death, 23 *reproving Peter for dissuading Him from it:* 24 and admonisheth those that will follow Him, to bear the Cross.

XVI. THE Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired Him that He would shew them a sign from Heaven.

The Pharisees and *Scribes* had already made the same demand of our LORD<sup>a</sup>. Here we find the former sect conspiring with their rivals, the *Sadducees*, to ensnare the Holy One. Take notice what readiness is found in those who are opposed to each other<sup>b</sup> in every thing else, to combine for an unholy purpose,—to unite in their common hostility against the Truth. Herod and Pontius Pilate are ‘made friends,’ when the LORD of Glory is to be crucified<sup>c</sup>. The Stoics and Epicureans can unite in order to encounter St. Paul<sup>d</sup>. Some-

<sup>a</sup> St. Matthew xii. 38.<sup>b</sup> Consider Acts xxiii. 6 to 10.<sup>c</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 12.—1 Cor. ii. 8.<sup>d</sup> Acts xvii. 18.

thing similar is witnessed at the present day in the unholy alliance which is ever and anon formed against the Church of these Realms by the various sects, whether of home or foreign growth, which are (wisely) tolerated among us. Even the unbeliever is hailed as a welcome ally, when the Church of CHRIST is the object of active enmity.

Concerning the 'sign from Heaven' required by these evil men, the Reader is referred to the notes on St. Matthew xii. 38, and St. Mark viii. 11. They desired to see Manna descend<sup>a</sup>, or the Sun stand still<sup>c</sup>, or thunder and rain appear<sup>g</sup>, or fire come down from Heaven<sup>h</sup>; or again, that the shadow should return backward ten degrees<sup>i</sup>. But,—

- 2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather* ;  
 3 for the sky is red : and in the morning, *It will be foul weather to-day* ; for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky ; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times ?

It is well remarked by a living writer,—“ Our LORD calls them ‘Hypocrites,’ because they pretended a desire to be satisfied as to His being the CHRIST, while they were really determined not to acknowledge Him as such.” See what has been said on this subject in the note on the last part of St. Mark viii. 11 ; and on St. Mark viii. 15.

<sup>a</sup> Exodus xvi. 4, 15.

<sup>c</sup> Joshua x. 12, 13.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Sam. xii. 16 to 18. <sup>h</sup> 2 Kings i. 10, 12. <sup>i</sup> 2 Kings xx. 10, 11.

"The signs of the times," or rather, "of the Seasons,"—clearly denotes those many indications which a watchful and attentive spirit might have discovered that 'the fulness of Time' had arrived, and that the Reign of MESSIAH was, at last, actually at hand. The preaching of the Baptist, (the promised Elijah,)—His own Miracles,—and the unexpected fulfilment in Himself of so many dark places of Prophecy,—were perhaps the chief things to which the Blessed Speaker may be thought to have alluded.—He proceeds,

A wicked and adulterous generation seek- 4  
eth after a sign ; and there shall no sign be  
given unto it, but the sign of the Prophet  
Jonas.

"This saying, St. Matthew has already given<sup>k</sup> ;  
whence we may store up for our information that  
the LORD spoke the same thing many times. Where  
there are contradictions, therefore, which cannot  
be explained, it may be understood that the same  
sayings were uttered on two different occasions." So far, an ancient Father. See the note on St. Mark viii. 12.—Strange, that the sign of His Resurrection oftenest insisted upon by our Blessed LORD,—the only one to which He condescended to appeal,—had been exhibited by *the first* of the Prophets !

St. Mark introduces these sayings of our LORD,  
(which, however, he gives far more briefly,) with the

<sup>k</sup> St. Matth. xii. 39.



statement that "He sighed deeply in His Spirit<sup>1</sup>." With the deepest sorrow, we may be sure, were the words spoken. After which, it is solemnly added,—

And He left them, and departed.

That is, He embarked with His Disciples; and crossing the Northern part of the Sea of Galilee, repaired to the Eastern shore,—the scene of His two recent miracles of feeding. See the notes on St. Mark viii. 13 and 14, concerning this and the next verse.

- 5 And when His Disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

In which statement, (remarks an ancient writer,) "it should be observed how far the Disciples were from any longing for luxuries, when they took so small care even for the very necessities of life."

- 6 Then JESUS said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

His Human Soul was yet filled with heavy thoughts concerning the hard-hearted persons with whom He had so recently had to do. Not so, the Disciples. Their hearts soared not, like His. The mention of 'leaven' suggested to them nothing beyond the notion of bodily food, and

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark viii. 12.

anxiety concerning the scanty supply of bread with which they had set out from home.

Full of deep meaning, we may be sure, was this caution concerning "leaven" on our SAVIOUR'S lips. Consider how it had been threatened in the ancient Law, that whosoever of the people ate leavened bread at certain seasons, "*that* soul should be cut off from Israel<sup>m</sup>." And was it not the true Israel,—the Israel of God,—to whom the language of the text was addressed? . . . See more in the note to St. Mark viii. 15.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread. Which when JESUS perceived, He said unto them,

Rather,—“And JESUS, knowing it, said to them<sup>n</sup>,”—

O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

“They were perplexed about the meaning of their Master's saying, and imagined that He intended by it to caution them against supplying their present want with such leavened bread as had been made by any Pharisee or Sadducee. We are told that the Jews had religious scruples about the persons from whom they got their leaven; and

<sup>m</sup> Exodus xii. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Concerning which words see the note on St. Mark ii. 8.

in particular that they would not take it from a heathen; or even a Samaritan. This may account for the mistake of the Disciples.—It appears further that while they thought they were cautioned against procuring bread made with the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they were at the same time troubled as to what they should do for the want of bread :” having brought with them only one loaf°. So far an excellent modern Commentary<sup>p</sup> . . . . Our LORD proceeds,—

- 9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand,  
10 and how many baskets ye took up? neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

From St. Mark’s Gospel, we discover that the Blessed Speaker paused at the end of each inquiry, and obtained from the lips of His Disciples an admission that the number of the baskets was on one occasion “Twelve,” on the other “Seven<sup>q</sup>.” The difference in *the kind of basket* which was employed to contain the superfluities of either meal, is marked with great exactness in the original Greek. Our SAVIOUR proceeds,—

- 11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

° St. Mark viii. 14.    <sup>p</sup> By Archdeacon Hale and Bp. Lonsdale.

<sup>q</sup> St. Mark viii. 19, 20, where see the note.

He required at their hands that they should 'understand' the deep spiritual meaning which attached to His Divine words: reproved them for taking literally the words which He had spoken in a mystical sense. See the note on St. Mark viii. 21. One of the Ancients remarks,—“that you may learn what force CHRIST's reproof had upon His Disciples, and how it roused their sluggish spirit, hear what says the Evangelist:”—

Then understood they how that He bade 12 *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the Doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

“Yet He had not interpreted this to them,” proceeds the same Father<sup>r</sup>. “This instruction of our LORD, therefore, drew them away from Jewish observances, and made them attentive instead of careless, and raised them out of their little faith; that whenever they should seem to have but small provision of bread, they might have no fear about food, but might despise all such things.”

Concerning the use of the term 'Leaven' in this place, and the reason of it, enough has been said in the note on St. Mark viii. 15. The spreading and transforming influence of a little leaven, gives a lively notion of the importance of attending anxiously to the beginnings, whether of good or evil, in ourselves. Men have often traced the altered complexion of a whole life to a single

<sup>r</sup> Chrysostom.

conversation,—sometimes to a single saying. “A little leaven,” (as the great Apostle hath *twice* remarked,) “leaveneth the whole lump.” The Enemy knows this well, and therefore plies us with suggestions to commit *little* sins.

Our Blessed LORD, having wrought a wondrous miracle at Bethsaida Julias, (a different town from the Bethsaida commonly mentioned<sup>1</sup>),—which miracle, St. Mark alone of all the Evangelists describes<sup>2</sup>,—proceeded in a Northerly direction, still keeping on to the East of the River Jordan, until we find Him arriving among “the towns,” or, as St. Matthew expresses it, “the parts,” (here rendered “the coasts”) of Cæsarea Philippi<sup>3</sup>. Hard by was *Dan*, which the proverbial expression ‘from Dan to Beersheba’ indicates as the most northerly point of the Holy Land. The Reader will find more on this subject in the note on St. Mark viii. 27.

### 13 When JESUS came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi,

—“it came to pass, as He was alone, praying, His Disciples were with Him; and<sup>4</sup>,”—

He asked His Disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?

Concerning the title which our Blessed LORD here, and on so many other occasions assumed to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 6, and Gal. v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See the note on St. Mark viii. 21.   <sup>3</sup> St. Mark viii. 22 to 26.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning Cæsarea Philippi, see the note on St. Mark viii. 27.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke ix. 18.

Himself, the Reader is referred to what has been written in the note on St. Matthew viii. 20.... 'Thou,—the Son of Man, and therefore Very Man,'—(it seems to be implied by the confession which followed,) 'art THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD, and therefore Very God:' which was a full recognition of the Incarnate JEHOVAH,—the Great Mystery of the Gospel.... In the meantime, the Apostles proceed to answer the question of their LORD :—

And they said, Some say that *Thou art* 14 John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.

The Reader is referred to the note on St. Mark viii. 28, concerning this reply.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye 15 that I am ?

Rather,—“ But *ye*, whom say ye that I am ?” .... From which two questions of our LORD, (observes an excellent Writer\*), “it is evident that neither to the multitude, nor to the Disciples, had He declared Himself to be the CHRIST; and likewise, that the Faith which He would elicit from the Disciples was different from that held by the multitude around. He had not told them, save by that Voice of God which speaks within; and ‘by the cords of a man\*,’ by which He drew them on to this, the very consummation and crown of all. It

\* Rev. Isaac Williams.

\* Hosea xi. 4.

was for *this*, He had been with them thus long. It was for *this*, that He had chosen them: for *this*, that He had ordained them. For *this*, He had made them witnesses of so many Miracles: had explained to them His Parables: had reproved their slowness of understanding; that they might come to the knowledge of the SON of GOD. For ‘this is Life Eternal,—that they might know Thee, the Only True GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom Thou hast sent.’”

Take notice that this inquiry is addressed *to them all*: the whole Apostolic body is questioned; and St. Peter, in making reply, answers in behalf of the rest, as he had already done, once before<sup>2</sup>. The Fathers point out that he speaks as the mouthpiece of the Apostles,—as their leader, (“*first*, Simon,” it is said in a certain place<sup>3</sup>),—as the most ardent and forward of the Twelve.

- 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of the living GOD.

There must certainly have been something in this Confession which implied a truer recognition of the Divine Nature of CHRIST than was contained in any of those other confessions,—glorious and adequate as they may at first appear,—which are found in different parts of the Gospel: else could it never have called forth such words of special commendation. Strange to say, however,

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 3.    <sup>2</sup> St. John vi. 69.    <sup>3</sup> St. Matthew x. 2.

St. Peter had already (at Capernaum) professed the common Faith of himself and his fellow-Disciples *in the self-same form of words* which he here employs:—"We believe and are sure that Thou art *the CHRIST, the SON of the Living GOD*<sup>b</sup>." The words may be the same, however, and yet the intention of the speaker may be very different, at different times<sup>c</sup>; and it is impossible not to suspect that it was so here. When *the form* of Confession differs, it is obvious to suspect a difference of intention. Nathanael's words, for instance,—“Thou art the SON of GOD; Thou art the King of Israel<sup>d</sup>.” the speech of the Disciples in the ship,—“Of a truth, Thou art the SON of GOD<sup>e</sup>.” the profession of Martha,—“I believe that Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of GOD, which should come into the world<sup>f</sup>.” all these may well be thought to be only nobler methods of expressing what the woman of Canaan, and the two blind men of Jericho intended when they cried to our SAVIOUR, saying, “Have mercy on us, O LORD, Thou Son of David<sup>g</sup>.” language which did indeed imply that JESUS of Nazareth was, in the speaker's opinion, the promised MESSIAH; but which was yet consistent with the belief that He was but an Earthly Deliverer, and a Temporal Prince. In this recognition of CHRIST as “the SON of the living God,” however, it seems to be implied that He was the

<sup>b</sup> St. John vi. 69.<sup>c</sup> See the note on St. Luke i. 20.<sup>d</sup> St. John i. 49.<sup>e</sup> St. Matth. xiv. 33.<sup>f</sup> St. John xi. 27.<sup>g</sup> Matthew xv. 22; and xx. 31.



Only-Begotten of Him with Whom is "the Well of Life<sup>b</sup>:" concerning Whom it is emphatically declared that He "*liveth*<sup>i</sup>;" and therefore, (as it is said in the Creed), that He was "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, being *of one substance with the FATHER*," .... Accordingly it follows,—

- 17 And JESUS answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but My FATHER which is in Heaven.

That is, 'Simon, son of Jona;' as it is said in St. John i. 42: by which name also our LORD thrice addressed the same Apostle after His Resurrection<sup>k</sup>. It has been well remarked by one of the Ancients that there would be little meaning in this mode of address on the present occasion, unless we suppose that the Divine Speaker thereby intended to shew that CHRIST is as naturally the Son of God, as Simon was the Son of Jonas; that is, of the same substance as He that begat Him.

St. Peter, like St. Paul, had 'not conferred with *flesh and blood*<sup>l</sup>:' that is, human lips had not been his instructors in the great mystery of the Gospel; neither had the suggestions of Natural Reason

<sup>b</sup> Ps. xxxvi. 9.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Sam. xxii. 47, or Ps. xviii. 46. Job xix. 25. Jer. iv. 2: v. 2: xii. 16: xvi. 14, 15: xlv. 26, &c. See also Deut. v. 26. Joshua iii. 10. 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36. Jeremiah x. 10, &c.

<sup>k</sup> St. John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

<sup>l</sup> Gal. i. 16.

guided him to the discovery of so great a truth. But he had derived his teaching directly from God Himself: and in *this* consisted his 'blessedness.'—Our LORD proceeds,

And I say also unto thee, That thou art 18  
Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My  
Church :

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the World<sup>m</sup>." The present hour had been accordingly foreseen by our SAVIOUR at His first interview with this, His highly favoured servant; for when JESUS first "beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: *thou shalt be called Cephas*<sup>n</sup>;"—which, (as St. John explains,) signifies 'a stone,' or 'Rock.' In a similar way, Jacob is found to have *twice* received from God the new name of 'Israel'.

But this memorable promise must have ran far more pointedly in the original language, than when it is translated into our own tongue. 'Thou art a Rock (*Cepha*); and upon this Rock (*Cepha*) I will build My Church.'—One of the ancients\* paraphrases the place thus:—Thou hast said to Me, 'Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of the living God:' therefore *I* say unto *thee*,—(and for Me to speak is to make it so,)—'*Thou art a Rock*' . . . . For as from CHRIST proceeded that Light to the Apostles whereby they were called 'the

<sup>m</sup> Acts xv. 18.

<sup>n</sup> St. John i. 42.

<sup>o</sup> Gen. xxxii. 28 and xxxv. 10.

\* Jerome.

Light of the World<sup>p</sup>,’ so upon Simon, who believed in CHRIST the Rock<sup>q</sup>, was bestowed the name of Rock.—Some of the Fathers thought that CHRIST, not St. Peter, is ‘the Rock’ here spoken of; and some, that not St. Peter, but his Confession, was the Rock on which CHRIST was to build His Church : but such meanings are forced and unnatural. The obvious interpretation of the place is the true one : namely, “ Upon thee, as upon a sure foundation, I will build My spiritual House<sup>r</sup>.” Not that we would altogether *exclude* other meanings. We know that, in a certain sense, ‘other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST<sup>s</sup>.’ We know, too, that, it was the firmness of the Apostle’s *Faith*,—his rock-like *Confession*, therefore,—on which our SAVIOUR CHRIST ‘as a wise masterbuilder<sup>t</sup>,’ proceeded to build. But all this is somewhat foreign to the question. The primary meaning of our LORD’s words is the thing to be considered . . . Let none be afraid of the consequences of such an interpretation. It might be thought to make something, indeed, for the Church of *Jerusalem* : but for the Church of *Rome*, it makes *nothing*,—nor *can* make.

Concerning the fulfilment of this great prophecy, we shall find no more trustworthy guide than our learned Bishop Pearson. “The only way” (he says,) “to attain unto the knowledge of the true notion of *the Church*, is to search the New Testa-

<sup>p</sup> St. Matth. v. 14.    <sup>q</sup> 1 Cor. x. 4.    <sup>r</sup> Consider 1 Tīm. iii. 15.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11

<sup>t</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 10.

ment, and from the places there which mention it, to conclude what is the nature of it. To which purpose it will be necessary to take notice, that our SAVIOUR first speaking of it, mentioneth it as that which then *was not*, but afterwards *was to be*; as when He spake unto the great Apostle, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church:' but when He had ascended into Heaven, and the HOLY GHOST had come down, when Peter" by his Sermon on the Day of Pentecost<sup>a</sup> "had converted *three thousand souls*<sup>x</sup>, which were added to the hundred and twenty Disciples" of which we heard before<sup>y</sup>, "then there was a Church; and that, built upon Peter, according to our SAVIOUR's promise; for afterwards, we read 'the LORD added to the Church daily such as should be saved.'" In short, on the first Christian Pentecost, ten days after the Ascension, "St. Peter took upon himself to build the Church; which he then performed when he preached the Gospel by which the Church was first gathered." Nor was it members of the *Jewish* nation only which he thus first wrought, like living stones, into the spiritual fabric of CHRIST's Church; but he was sent, by special revelation from Heaven, to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his family also,—who were the first *Gentile* believers<sup>x</sup> . . . . Thus was there "laid in Sion" that precious "Corner-stone," of which Prophecy is so full<sup>a</sup>; for in Sion was the first

<sup>a</sup> Acts ii. 14 to 39.<sup>x</sup> Acts ii. 41.<sup>y</sup> Acts i. 15.<sup>x</sup> Acts x. Note carefully Acts xv. 7.<sup>a</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 16.

Church built. The Church of Jerusalem was the Mother of all Churches: for to *that* Church “all others since have been in a manner added, and conjoined<sup>b</sup> ;” making up together that *one* “Holy Catholic Church” in which we profess to believe, and for the good estate of which we pray. A gracious promise follows :—

and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

The ‘gates of Hell’ is a remarkable, and, at first sight, a perplexing expression; but ‘the gates of the Grave<sup>c</sup>,’ and ‘the gates of Death<sup>d</sup>,’ are found in other parts of Scripture. The phrase, as our LORD here employs it, most likely denotes ‘the Infernal Powers,’—‘the Enmity of the Unseen World,’—‘the arts and devices of Satan;’—and He here promises that these shall not finally prevail against His Church. For “though the Providence of God doth suffer many particular Churches to cease,” (as five out of those seven mentioned in the ii<sup>nd</sup>. and iii<sup>rd</sup>. chapters of the Book of Revelation,) “yet the promise of the same God will never permit, that all of them at once shall perish. When CHRIST first spake particularly to St. Peter, He sealed ~~His~~ speech with a powerful promise of perpetuity, saying, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.’ When He spake generally to all the rest of the Apostles to the

<sup>b</sup> Bp. Pearson.

<sup>c</sup> Is. xxxviii. 10.

<sup>d</sup> Ps. ix. 13.

same purpose, ('Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST;') He added a promise to the same effect,—'and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World<sup>f</sup>.' The first of these promises assures us of the continuance of the Church, because it is built upon a Rock;" (in conformity with what our LORD had said at the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount, about the manner in which the Wise Man built his House<sup>g</sup>;) "the latter of these promises giveth not only an assurance of the continuance of the Church, but also the cause of that continuance, which is *the presence of CHRIST<sup>h</sup>*." . . . Still addressing St. Peter, our LORD continues,—

And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

As, in the Ordination of Priests, the Bishop delivers *the Bible* to every one, saying 'Take thou *authority to preach the Word of GOD*,' &c., so here our LORD, when He promises to St. Peter that He will hereafter give him *the Keys* of the Kingdom of Heaven, promises that He will give him *authority to bind and to loose*.

And the power of 'binding and loosing' in 'the

\* St. Matthew xxviii. 19.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matthew xxviii. 20.

<sup>g</sup> See the note on St. Matthew vii. 25.

<sup>h</sup> Bp. Pearson.

Kingdom of Heaven,' (that is, *in the Church of CHRIST*;) clearly refers to the exercise of that power which belongs of necessity to Rulers: a power, it should be well observed, which was afterwards conveyed to the whole Apostolic body, and in the self-same words<sup>1</sup>: whence an ancient Father remarks, "All we Bishops have in St. Peter received the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>k</sup>." "When the Jewish Teachers disallowed anything as being unlawful," (says an excellent modern Writer,) "they were said to 'bind' it: and when they allowed anything as lawful, they were said to 'loose' it. Our LORD therefore here assures Peter, that whatever rules he should lay down, or whatever judgment he should pass, in the exercise of his Apostolical authority, for the well ordering of the Church on Earth, should be ratified and confirmed in Heaven<sup>l</sup>." The solemn assurance conveyed at the Ordination of Priests, was of course especially implied and intended; namely, "Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained<sup>m</sup>." But, (as the great Father of the West observes,) "not Peter alone, but the whole Church, bindeth and looseth sins." Doubtless, only so is this power given that "the power of *Authority* rests with God alone,—who openeth by the pouring forth of His

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xviii. 18.

<sup>k</sup> Ambrose.

<sup>l</sup> Archdeacon Hale and Bp. Lonsdale.

<sup>m</sup> The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests, in the Book of Common Prayer.

grace: the power of *Dignity*, with CHRIST,—who openeth through the merits of His Passion. The power of *Stewardship*, it is which rests with the Rulers of the Church,—who open through ministration of the sacraments.”

Let none, therefore, suppose from this promise (observes a learned Latin Father,) “that the innocent may be condemned, or the guilty absolved;” for “what will be inquired into before the LORD will be, not the sentence of the priests, but the life of him that is judged. We read in Leviticus that the lepers were commanded to shew themselves to the Priests; and if they *had* the leprosy, then they were made unclean by the Priest. Not *the Priest* makes them leprous and unclean, but, having knowledge of what is Leprosy, and what is not, he can discern who is clean, and who is unclean. In the same way then, as the Priest makes the leper unclean, the Bishop or Presbyter binds or looses,—not those who are without sin or guilt; but, in the discharge of his function, when he has heard the varieties of their sins, he knows who is to be bound and who loosed.” Thus far, Jerome.

A more remarkable question, however, here awaits us, and requires a few words. Strange as it may appear, and monstrous as the pretension obviously is, the Church of Rome, (which *certainly* was not founded by St. Peter,) rests no small portion of her claims to supremacy, and authority over the other Churches of Christendom, on these few words addressed by CHRIST to His highly-



favoured Apostle. Without engaging in a controversial discussion, (which would be out of place in these pages,) it shall suffice to point out, first, that although upon St. Peter, the Rock, CHRIST declared that He would found His Church, it does not by any means follow therefrom that St. Peter was to become *the Supreme Governor* of that Church: still less does it follow that *the Bishops of Rome* have derived from him the same right of supremacy. But, in fact, the Apostles themselves, (who must needs have been the best judges of the meaning of our LORD's words,) discovered in them no such grant or promise of superior authority as is pretended: why else did they, more than once, dispute 'which of themselves was the greatest'?" Why are "James, *Cephas*, and John<sup>o</sup>" mentioned as 'pillars' of the Church, without any notice of inequality between them? Why did St. Paul "withstand St. Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed<sup>p</sup>?" and St. James, not St. Peter, give sentence at the first Council<sup>q</sup>? *Precedence in Rank* implies no degree of *superior Authority*.—Touching the first building of the Church, (as one of the oldest of the Fathers<sup>r</sup> inquires,)—"If you think the whole Church was built on Peter alone, what will you say concerning John, the son of Thunder, and concerning each of the rest of the Apostles?"—"You say" (remarks another) "that the Church is founded on Peter; but the Church is elsewhere

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xxii. 24. St. Mark ix. 34.

<sup>o</sup> Gal. ii. 9.

<sup>p</sup> Galat. ii. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xv. 13.

<sup>r</sup> Origen.

declared to be founded on *all* the Apostles<sup>a</sup>;" alluding to that well-known place in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the chief corner-stone<sup>b</sup>."

But, in the next place, let it be observed that even if 'the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven' *had* conferred superior authority and dominion over all the rest of Christendom;—and if those Keys *had been* committed by our SAVIOUR to St. Peter exclusively;—and if St. Peter had *really* been the first Bishop of Rome:—under all these combined suppositions, the Bishops of Rome in perpetuity would find it impossible to make out even a probability that the like awful prerogative which they claim for the great Apostle, hath descended to themselves. But, in truth, these assumptions are found to be fallacious, at every step. For, first, the Keys cannot, of course, be supposed to have conferred upon St. Peter any other powers of binding and loosing than were conferred upon the rest of the Apostles; and next, those powers *were* conveyed to the whole Apostolic body, even in the self-same words with which the Keys are here committed to St. Peter,—as may be seen by a reference to St. Matthew xviii. 18. Lastly, it is quite certain that St. Peter was never a Bishop of Rome at all. He is reckoned indeed by a very ancient Church writer as the first Bishop of that See; but the very same writer reckons him as *the first*

<sup>a</sup> Jerome.

<sup>b</sup> Ephes. ii. 20. Compare Revel. xxi. 14.

*Bishop of Antioch also.* Now, he *cannot* have been *both*. Irenæus, writing much earlier, (A.D. 177,) calls *Linus* the first Bishop. In fact, (as we have elsewhere pointed out<sup>a</sup>,) it is one of the marks of distinction between an Apostle and a Bishop, that the former was *universally charged*,—that is, had a general commission in all places, towards all persons<sup>v</sup>: the latter, had *a several See*.—This entire fiction of the Romanists is, in a word, the monstrous invention of a late and ambitious age. Nay; so far from admitting her vain and boastful pretensions, many will be found to inquire how a Church so corrupt and idolatrous as the Romish continues to exist at all? The answer to this question will be,—‘Because she yet holds (God be praised for it!) a right Faith in respect of the great doctrine which St. Peter confessed: wherefore, even against *her* have not the Gates of Hell prevailed.’

- 20 Then charged He His Disciples that they should tell no man that He was JESUS the CHRIST.

After all that may be said in the way of explanation, this must be confessed to remain a very dark, and very mysterious statement. It is found that “as He had been so solicitous that the manifestation of His Divine Power should not be published by those He healed; as He had commanded the Evil Spirits not to make known His Godhead; and as, for this Confession, He had retired with His Apo-

<sup>a</sup> See the note on St. Luke vi. 13.

<sup>v</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 28.

stles to a place so distant : so now, on their return, this great truth on which the Salvation of Mankind depended, is to be as the Treasure hid in a field<sup>w</sup>; or as the seed buried in the Earth<sup>x</sup>; or as the Leaven hid in three measures of meal<sup>y</sup>.

By the words which follow, our LORD seems to have intended to banish any ambitious notions which may have sprung up in the minds of His followers at the mention of a Church to be shortly built, and a Kingdom soon to come. Expectations of worldly grandeur may well have arisen at such a time, which could not be more effectually opposed than by thus unfolding the prospect of His approaching Sufferings and Death. Accordingly,—

From that time forth began JESUS to shew 21 unto His Disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Thus did He lay before them the whole mystery of what was to be hereafter : a course of events for which they were little prepared, as the affectionate, yet mistaken remonstrance of St. Peter, which follows, sufficiently shews.

Then Peter took Him, and began to re- 22 buke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, LORD : this shall not be unto Thee.

The Apostle, in his warmth,—his mingled love

<sup>w</sup> St. Matth. xiii. 44.    <sup>x</sup> St. Matth. xiii. 31.    <sup>y</sup> St. Matth. xiii. 33.

and terror,—seems to have laid his hands upon the sacred person of CHRIST, while he spoke these words . . . “Observe how entirely he is at a loss concerning those things which had *not* been revealed to him !” remarks one of the Fathers. For it is said of our SAVIOUR,—

- 23 But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan : thou art an offence unto Me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

See how sternly CHRIST puts him away ! “the intention,” (as Bishop Sanderson points out) “be it granted never so good, is insufficient to warrant an action good, so long as it faileth either in the object, or manner, or any requisite circumstance whatever.” May not the practical lesson to be derived from this incident be, that men should reject with indignation, refuse even to listen to, the suggestions of mistaken Friendship which would dissuade them from treading the pathway of Duty, if it threatens also to prove a pathway of Pain ?

Concerning the three foregoing verses, the Reader is requested to read what has been offered further on St. Mark viii. 31, 32, and 33. Satan, availing himself of the Apostle’s ignorance, had impelled him to utter a saying, the tendency of which was to throw a stumbling-block in the way of the Son of Man. The Death and Passion of CHRIST which were to follow,—terrible, doubtless even in the remote anticipation, as they are known

to have proved in the near prospect\*,—were not to be objected against by the immediate Followers, and chosen Disciples of the LAMB, as unworthy of Him: or such an insinuation must be repelled, as originating with none other than the Father of Lies. To 'savour the things of men' here means to have the affections set on worldly things.

How striking is it to discover that the very man who, only a moment before was named a *Rock*,—had become already a *stone of offence*, in the SAVIOUR'S way! "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" "It is evident that the Temptations of the Devil are most strong after God's people have discharged some extraordinary duties to God, or have received most help from God. You find that immediately after the LORD'S Supper, the Devil desired to winnow the Disciples; and he entered into *one*. After CHRIST had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was tempted of the Devil. No sooner, (as Bishop Hall observes,) was He out of the Water of Baptism, but He was in the Fire of Temptation."

Then said JESUS unto His Disciples, 24

Or, as it is in St. Mark,—“When He had called the people unto Him, with His Disciples also, He said unto them<sup>b</sup>,”—

If any *man* will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow Me.

\* St. Matth. xxvi. 39, 42. • 1 Cor. x. 12. <sup>b</sup> St. Mark viii. 34.

One of the ancients observes,—“Because, after the Cross, we require a new strength, He adds ‘And follow Me.’” “And this,” (remarks another Father,) “is because it may happen that a man may suffer, and yet not follow CHRIST; that is, when he does not suffer for CHRIST’s sake.”

In St. Luke’s Gospel, it is “take up his Cross *daily*.” Bp. Wilson recommends that men should every day, in some small matter, practise self-denial: perform some one act, which may conform them more and more to the image of their LORD.... See the note on St. Mark viii. 34.

- 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.

A few remarks on the sayings contained in verses 24 and 25, will be found in the notes on St. Matthew x. 38 and 39,—to which the Reader is referred.

- 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

“Having thus called upon His Disciples to deny themselves, and take up their Cross,” (says an old Writer), “He filled them with terror. These severe tidings are therefore followed by more joyful:”—

\* St. Luke ix. 23.

For the Son of Man shall come in the <sup>27</sup> Glory of His FATHER with His Angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.

By which words, our LORD seems to convey the blessed assurance that "He will come hereafter with glory to recompense men abundantly for the sacrifices which He now calls upon them to make for His sake."—He says "the Glory of the FATHER," because "the FATHER hath given Him authority to execute judgment<sup>d</sup>."

It is to be observed moreover that this Discourse is so adjusted as to convey to the minds of the Apostles as near a view of the Truth as they were able as yet to receive. The mention of 'a Church,' and 'the kingdom of Heaven,' had awakened proud thoughts and lofty hopes: it had been accordingly followed by an outline of the Mystery of the Atonement, the circumstances of Pain and Humiliation which must first be, as the condition of future Glory. Strangely perplexing was the picture thus presented to the eyes of the Disciples. Our LORD therefore reconciles them to it by speaking of that future coming in Glory, which they had ever been accustomed to connect in their minds with the Advent of MESSIAH. And to support them in their expectation of this event, yet so distant, He promises, (in the next verse), an immediate, sensible manifestation, as an earn-

<sup>d</sup> St. John v. 27.



est of that glorious Coming which might not take place till the end of the world. As it follows,—

- 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.

This announcement will be found in the three first Gospels\*; and on each occasion it is introduced in exactly the same way. From the close connexion in which it stands with the History of the Transfiguration, which immediately follows on all three occasions, it is impossible to resist the conviction that the words themselves refer to that great event. It is here described as the “Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.” St. Mark’s words are—“Till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power.” St. Luke says simply—“till they see the Kingdom of God.” The meaning must be, that the great Dispensation which would then only be fulfilled when CHRIST should come to judge the World at the last Day,—was about at once to begin. A glorious foretaste of that His final coming, was about to be at once revealed. In the words of a learned Latin Father,—“As was His appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration such will it be at the Day of Judgment.”

\* See St. Mark ix. 1 and St. Luke ix. 27

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 *The Transfiguration of CHRIST.* 14 *He healeth the lunatick,*  
22 *foretelleth His own Passion,* 24 *and payeth tribute.*

It will be remembered that the preceding Chapter ended with the following remarkable prophecy:—"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of Death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." As already explained, these words cannot be referred to any recorded event so reasonably as to the Transfiguration of CHRIST, which is next brought before us: but the Reader must be referred on this head to what has been already offered in the notes on St. Matthew xvi. 28, and St. Luke ix. 27.

The chief events which go before must be borne distinctly in mind by him who would profit by what is to follow. It should be remembered that during the recent sojourn of our SAVIOUR and His Twelve Apostles in 'the towns of Cæsarea Philippi<sup>a</sup>,' St. Peter's splendid confession of the Divinity of the Son of Man had occurred: whereupon followed the splendid promise which was discussed at so much length in the last Chapter.

<sup>a</sup> St. Mark viii. 27. Compare St. Matth. xvi. 13.

Then came some remarkable predictions; and closely connected with these, (as we believe,) stands our LORD's Transfiguration. For, as He had been preparing the minds of His Followers for His own coming Humiliation, and their's also<sup>b</sup>, so had He supported them by an allusion to that final Advent in Glory, when He will reward the just, and in the sight of Men and Angels confess them to be His own. Yet more completely to build up His Apostles, and support their Faith, the Almighty One proceeds to give them an immediate earnest of His future glorious Advent<sup>c</sup>; by revealing Himself to three of their number AS HE IS. "He took with Him three," (says an ancient Writer,) "that in the mouths of two or three witnesses every word might be established." St. Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, (the only Disciples on whom He had bestowed a new name,) are accordingly admitted to a sight of His Glory, and to a foretaste of the brightness of His Kingdom. As it follows,—

- 1 XVII. And after six days, JESUS taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

If the 'high mountain' which was the scene of this mysterious transaction was Mount Tabor, (as Tradition relates,) the Blessed Company will have

<sup>b</sup> St. Matthew xvi. 21 to 25.

<sup>c</sup> Surely St. Peter alludes to the Transfiguration in this very point of view,—1 St. Peter v. 1.

crossed the Jordan since the concluding events of the former Chapter, and travelled into Galilee. But there is no reason for supposing that they did so: rather the reverse<sup>d</sup>. This event may very well have taken place on some eminence East of the Jordan, concerning which all Tradition has perished. It is quite the manner of the HOLY SPIRIT to draw a veil over places and persons,—doubtless because the carnal heart is so prone to spend itself on these, instead of looking up to Him who is above all: and accordingly, when St. Peter, in his Second Epistle, would describe what occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration, it will be observed that he simply calls it “the Holy Mount” . . . . Perhaps it is *better* that we should *not* know which the place was. Surely it would be too much to visit such a locality! Only three of the Apostles were deemed fit to behold the Transfiguration. Which of ourselves can be thought worthy to behold even the spot where it took place?

For some remarks on the highly favoured witnesses of the great transaction which follows, the Reader is referred to the note on St. Mark ix. 2.—JESUS, then, bringeth His three Disciples “into an high Mountain apart,”—

and was transfigured before them: and 2 His Face did shine as the Sun, and His raiment was white as the Light.

<sup>d</sup> See St. Mark ix. 30.

<sup>e</sup> 2 St. Peter i. 18.

The nature of the change which passed over His Divine Person, it is more easy to imagine than to describe: more easy to describe than to explain. The very same Being whom they had all along known,—yet marvellously altered from what He had ever seemed,—every feature, every part of His Body, had become invested with glory, and shone with dazzling lustre, which His raiment was unable to eclipse or even to obscure. St. Matthew's words in this place, recal the appearance vouchsafed by Revelation to St. John the Divine:—"His Head and His Hairs were white like wool, as white as snow<sup>f</sup>; and His Eyes as a flame of fire; and His Feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; . . . and His Countenance was *as the Sun shineth in his strength*." "His raiment was white as the Light;" for this was He 'who covereth Himself with Light as with a Garment<sup>h</sup>.' "His Brightness," (says the Prophet,) "was as the Light<sup>i</sup>."

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.

• "Who appeared in Glory," (St. Luke says,) "and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem<sup>k</sup>." Concerning these mighty personages, the Reader is requested to refer to the notes on St. Luke ix. 31 and St. Mark ix. 4. As their converse confirmed what

<sup>f</sup> Compare Dan. vii. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Revel. i. 14 to 16.

<sup>h</sup> Ps. civ. 2.

<sup>i</sup> Habakkuk iii. 4.

<sup>k</sup> St. Luke ix. 31.

ur SAVIOUR had lately predicted concerning His own future sufferings, so did the Voice from Heaven which followed, confirm the great truth which St. Peter had lately proclaimed in his glorious Confession. CHRIST brings forth Moses and Elias, remarks an ancient Father,) "that He may shew the glory of His Cross, and thus soothe Peter and the other Disciples who were fearing His Death ; for they 'spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.' Wherefore He brings forward those who had exposed themselves to death for God's pleasure,—Moses, in resisting Pharaoh ; Elias, in resisting Ahab." But it may be thought that the chief reason why these two great Saints appeared was because they respectively set forth the Law and the Prophets,—*that* elder dispensation which now 'waxed old,' and was 'ready to vanish away<sup>1</sup>;' being fulfilled in the person of CHRIST. For both the Law and the Prophets "prophesied" of Him, as He Himself declares<sup>m</sup>. Of these two great Saints alone, it is recorded that they sustained a miraculous Fast of forty days<sup>n</sup>, like *that* of CHRIST: and it seems worth noticing that a wonderful privilege seems to have been conferred, in the case of either, on their mortal bodies. Elijah was translated, and never saw Death. Moses died indeed<sup>o</sup>, and was buried by God\* ; but Michael the Archangel is known to

<sup>1</sup> Heb. viii. 13.      <sup>m</sup> St. Matth. xi. 13. Compare St. John i. 45.

<sup>n</sup> Moses fasted three times for forty days : namely, Deut. ix. 9, 18, and Exod. xxxiv. 1, 2, 28.

<sup>o</sup> Joshua i. 2.

\* Deut. xxxiv. 6.

have had his body in special keeping; so that it may be thought to have never seen corruption<sup>p</sup>.

“But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep;” for it was probably the dead of night. “And when they were awake, they saw His Glory, and the two men that stood with Him<sup>q</sup>.” As for how they can have *known* the men who talked with our LORD to be Moses and Elias, whom they had never seen, one of the Ancients suggests, “that it was through the Majesty which came over them; whereby it is intimated that in the future glory, men will not only know one another, but those also whom they never before have seen.”

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto JESUS, LORD, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

“Not knowing what he said<sup>r</sup> :” or, as St. Mark expresses it,—“for he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid<sup>s</sup>.”

And yet, the question arises, What should have induced the Apostle to propose such a measure? One of the best of expositors<sup>t</sup> says that “seeing in this place great quietness and solitude, Peter thought that it would be a fit spot to take up their abode in; saying, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here.’ And

<sup>p</sup> Consider St. Jude’s Epistle,—verse 9; and compare that place with Hebrews ii. 14.

<sup>q</sup> St. Luke ix. 32.

<sup>r</sup> St. Luke ix. 33.

<sup>s</sup> St. Mark ix. 6.

<sup>t</sup> Chrysostom.

he proposed to build tabernacles ;” (that is, temporary dwelling-places,) “for he concluded that if he did this, Jesus would not go up to Jerusalem, and suffer.” . . . Take notice that a wish *to detain* the heavenly guests seems to have been St. Peter’s motive in speaking : for it is noticed particularly that he spoke *as Moses and Elias ‘departed’*.<sup>\*</sup> This falls in very well with the supposition of those who have thought that “Peter was so delighted at this view of the Majesty of the Lord, that forgetting everything else in the World, he would have abode there for ever.” . . . It seems certain that this great Apostle, notwithstanding his late Confession, notwithstanding our Lord’s many hints concerning the nature of His coming Kingdom, yet dreamed of Earthly splendour. He still thought that the Kingdom of the Elect was to be set up here on Earth.

While he yet spake, behold, a Bright Cloud 5  
overshadowed them : and behold a Voice out  
of the Cloud, which said, This is My Be-  
loved SON, in whom I am well pleased ;  
hear ye Him. And when the Disciples heard 6  
*it*, they fell on their face, and were sore  
afraid.

For some remarks on these two verses, the Reader is referred to the notes on St. Luke ix. 34, 35, 36. St. Matthew alone mentions that this was ‘a *bright* cloud :’ in which announcement, the

<sup>\*</sup> St. Luke ix. 33.



contrast between the Law and the Gospel is to be discerned; for when *the Law* was given, the Mountain burned with fire, "with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness"<sup>u</sup> . . . Moses learns here more than he had foretold concerning the 'Prophet like unto himself' whom God was to raise up hereafter to Israel<sup>w</sup>.—In the meantime, the Disciples have fallen to the ground; blinded by the excess of Light, and overcome by the awful spectacle and sound which they had witnessed.

7 And JESUS came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

This tender act of encouragement is noticed only by St. Matthew. How does it recal what happened in the case of the 'man greatly beloved'—"I . . . saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me. . . . Yet heard I the voice of His words: and when I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And behold, *an hand touched me*, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And He said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright<sup>x</sup>." . . . Consider also how it fared with the beloved Disciple when, by Revelation, he found himself in the same awful presence: "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And *He*

<sup>u</sup> Deut. iv. 11.    <sup>w</sup> Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19. Compare Acts iii. 22.

<sup>x</sup> Dan. x. 8, 9, 10, 11. See also viii. 18 : ix. 21 : x. 18.

*laid His right Hand upon me*, saying unto me, Fear not<sup>y</sup>."

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Such a Voice from Heaven is three times recorded to have been heard: at the Baptism of our LORD<sup>z</sup>, at the close of His Ministry<sup>a</sup>, and on the present occasion. — The saying itself has been thought to contain a reference to those words of Moses,—"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet . . . . like unto me; *unto Him ye shall hearken*<sup>b</sup>:" words which we know were fulfilled in the person of CHRIST<sup>c</sup>. But the drift of the Heavenly message seems to be somewhat as follows:—You have looked upon the great Lawgiver of My people; together with that ancient Prophet whom I most highly honoured of all. But you behold those *My Servants* no longer. JESUS, who brings you the Gospel, is found alone. Learn from this that the types of the Law and the predictions of the Prophets are in Him fulfilled, and have, in a manner, ceased; that from henceforth a new dispensation is about to begin. This is *My Beloved SON*: from henceforth, listen to *His Voice*, and obey *His Teaching*!

Some hours are here passed over in silence. It was now day,—

And as they came down from the moun- 9

<sup>y</sup> Revel. i. 17.    <sup>z</sup> St. Matth. iii. 17.    <sup>a</sup> St. John xii. 28.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. xviii. 15.

<sup>c</sup> See Acts iii. 22, and vii. 37.

tain, JESUS charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.

Thus does He, for the second time, at the end of a week, repeat the warning-note of Sorrows to come which He had already uttered in the presence of all His Disciples, when He was in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi<sup>2</sup>.

- 10 And His Disciples asked Him, saying,  
 Why then say the Scribes that Elias must  
 11 first come? And JESUS answered and said  
 unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and  
 restore all things :

Elijah had appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, and was already departed. Next morning, therefore, as they were coming down from the mountain, the three Apostles break the solemn silence by inquiring how this was to be reconciled with the well known interpretation of Malachi iv. 5, 6? a prophecy, which, (as appears from St. John i. 21<sup>a</sup>,) the Jews explained of *the personal advent* of the Tishbite. Our SAVIOUR spake freely of His own approaching Death and Resurrection. How then was Elias first to 'come, and restore all things?' Listen to Him, by whose Spirit the Prophets spake<sup>b</sup>, expounding the language of His ancient servant:—

- 12 but I say unto you, that Elias is come

<sup>a</sup> See St. Matth. xvi. 21.    <sup>a</sup> See also Ecclesiasticus xlviii. 10.

<sup>b</sup> 1 St. Peter i. 11.

already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the Disciples understood that He spake <sup>13</sup> unto them of John the Baptist.

They may have remembered the Baptist's attire<sup>c</sup>, which exactly resembled that of Elijah; as well as other particulars which clearly pointed him out to the eye of Faith as the promised Elijah. Our LORD's mournful allusion to the fate of His Forerunner, may have also helped to convince them that it was none other than John Baptist of whom He spake. Or they may have remembered His express assertion, on a former occasion, that this was he of whom Malachi wrote; and that, if they would receive it, this was Elias "which was for to come<sup>d</sup>."

Notwithstanding, however, this express language of CHRIST, (on two distinct occasions,) and the words of Gabriel; it was very generally believed by the ancient Church that the Tishbite *will yet appear in person*, before CHRIST's final Advent.

Our attention is next invited to a circumstance of a wholly different nature.—The blessed Company, on descending the Mount of Transfiguration, find a multitude of persons assembled about the nine Apostles who had been left behind, (probably

<sup>c</sup> See note on St. Matth. iii. 4.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matth. xi. 10, (quoting Malachi iii. 1,) and 14.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke i. 17.

on the previous evening,) at the foot of the Mountain.

- 14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a *certain* man,  
15 kneeling down to Him, and saying, LORD, have mercy on my Son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into  
16 the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy Disciples, and they could not cure him.

A 'lunatic,' means properly one whose mental malady is affected by the periodical changes of the Moon. Such, at least, is the meaning of the word. But whether St. Matthew intended to imply more than that the Father spoke of his Child in the ordinary language of ancient and modern times, as one afflicted with madness, may perhaps be questioned. All this, however, is recorded far more in detail by St. Mark<sup>f</sup>, whose Gospel should be carefully consulted in this place by him who desires fully to understand the sacred narrative. The Reader is referred to the remarks which have been already offered on this subject in the notes on St. Mark ix. 14 to 18.—It will be discovered that it was reserved for the second Evangelist to record many points of the very highest interest in connexion with the present Miracle.

- 17 Then JESUS answered and said, O faithless

<sup>f</sup> St. Mark ix. 14 to 29.

and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to Me.

See the note on St. Mark ix. 19: and take notice that our SAVIOUR here applies to the Jews the very language which Moses had applied to them so long before<sup>g</sup>.—It follows, in St. Mark's Gospel, "And they brought him unto Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the Spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming<sup>h</sup>."

And JESUS rebuked the Devil; and he<sup>18</sup> departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

But St. Mark relates the dialogue which our SAVIOUR held with the Father of the child on this occasion; and the very remarkable form of words in which our Blessed LORD cast out this evil spirit; as well as the Devil's violence on being ejected; and how nearly he thereby deprived the boy of life<sup>i</sup>. By saying that "the Child was cured from that very hour," St. Matthew here implies that the SAVIOUR's command to the unclean spirit 'never more to enter into him,' (which St. Mark notices,) was strictly obeyed.

It is quite absurd for the shallow professor of this world's wisdom to set aside this great miracle, or to turn away from it, with a remark that this

<sup>g</sup> Deut. xxxii. 20.

<sup>h</sup> St. Mark ix. 20.

<sup>i</sup> St. Mark ix. 25 to 27.

Boy was evidently afflicted with the disease called *Epilepsy*. The HOLY SPIRIT declares that he was possessed with a 'deaf and dumb, unclean spirit.' Either, therefore, his was *not* a case of (what men call) 'Epilepsy;' or, what man would in his case have rightly *called* by the name of 'Epilepsy,' was, *in point of fact*, the possession of an evil spirit. And Men are quite welcome to choose between these alternatives.

- 19 Then came the Disciples to JESUS apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

Not only 'apart,' or 'privately,' (as the word is translated in St. Mark's account of the same transaction<sup>k</sup>), but, (as we there also read,) "when He was come *into the House*." The nature of this inquiry of the nine Apostles has been already explained in the note on St. Mark ix. 28.

- 20 And JESUS said unto them, Because of your unbelief:

The same cause which made St. Peter begin to sink<sup>l</sup>,—and the blind man of Bethsaida recover his sight *by degrees*<sup>m</sup>;—the same cause which endangered the Restoration from Death of Jairus' daughter<sup>n</sup>, and the Healing of the Lunatic Child<sup>o</sup>; — *Unbelief* it was, which made the Apostles, (like Samson shorn), "become weak, and like any other man<sup>p</sup>." . . . It may be thought that the temporary

<sup>k</sup> St. Mark ix. 28.

<sup>l</sup> St. Matth. xiv. 30, 31.

<sup>m</sup> St. Mark viii. 23 to 25.

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark v. 35, 36.

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark ix. 22 to 24.

<sup>p</sup> Judges xvi. 17.

absence of their LORD, joined with the violence of His Enemies by whom they were surrounded, occasioned this declension of their faith. And if this could happen in the case of *Apostles*, how terrible is the warning which is here conveyed to every one of *us*, when left to ourselves; forsaken, even for an instant, by Him 'without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy!'

for verily I say unto you, If ye have Faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain,

(pointing to the Mount of Transfiguration,—the 'high mountain,' at the foot of which this miracle was performed; just as He may be presumed to have pointed to the Mount of Olives on the subsequent occasion when He employed the same words<sup>a</sup> :)

Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

To which wonderful words, St. Paul will be found to refer in his Chapter descriptive of the grace of Charity: "and though I have all Faith *so that I could remove mountains*<sup>r</sup>."—A manifest contrast is here intended between a grain of mustard-seed, "which indeed is the least of all seeds<sup>s</sup>,"—and a

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xxi. 21, 22. St. Mark xi. 22, 23.—Take notice that our LORD is found to have used *almost* the same language on a third, and wholly different occasion: viz. in St. Luke xvii. 6.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

<sup>s</sup> St. Matth. xiii. 32.



mighty mountain, which is the very emblem of immense bulk<sup>t</sup>. It is implied, moreover, that "the least spiritual power shall be mighty for the overthrow of powers the most formidable, which are merely of this world":<sup>u</sup> as well as for the removal of those lofty imaginations, those proud swelling things of the heart, which are discoursed of as 'mountains' in the prophecy which relates to St. John Baptist<sup>x</sup>.—Our SAVIOUR adds,—

- 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Thereby teaching us that there are certain kinds of possession against which these are weapons of peculiar efficacy: that against certain of man's spiritual enemies, he may prevail only by Abstinence in respect of meat and drink, and by Prayer<sup>y</sup>. For more, see the note on St. Mark ix. 29.

- 22 And while they abode in Galilee, JESUS said unto them, The Son of Man shall be  
23 betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again.

This is that prophetic allusion to His future Passion, Death, and Resurrection which the Angels referred to in addressing the women who visited the Sepulchre: "Remember how He spake

<sup>t</sup> Is. xl. 4: xli. 15, &c

<sup>u</sup> Rev. R. C. Trench.

<sup>x</sup> Isaiah xl. 4: quoted in St. Luke iii. 5.

<sup>y</sup> On 'Prayer and Fasting,' see the note on St. Matth. vi. 16.

unto you when He was yet in Galilee<sup>a</sup>." For, (as we are told in the preceding chapter,)—"from that time forth," (namely, from the time of St. Peter's Confession,) "began JESUS to shew unto His Disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things<sup>a</sup>."

Take notice that on *this* occasion, neither Simon Peter, nor any of the rest, 'took Him, and began to rebuke Him<sup>b</sup>.' It is simply added,

And they were exceeding sorry.

St. Mark relates concerning our SAVIOUR'S journey through Galilee, alluded to in verse 22,—"and He would not that any man should know it." The reason moreover is added,—"*for* He taught His Disciples" concerning His coming Death and Passion<sup>c</sup>: that is, He desired to devote the opportunities afforded by this prolonged tour to preparing their minds for the terrible trial of their faith and constancy which was soon to follow, at Jerusalem. It is hard indeed for *us*, familiar as we have become with the Doctrine of the Atonement, to realize the greatness of *their* trial. A crucified King!—a persecuted SAVIOUR!—nay more, One whom they knew to be "the SON of the living God<sup>d</sup>," yet liable to Death and Resurrection!—this may well have perplexed them; may well have rendered their Divine Master's patient teaching in private, a most necessary measure.

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 6.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 21.

<sup>b</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 22.

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark ix. 31.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 16.

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?

Having reached Capernaum, the tax of half a shekel, (about fifteen pence of our money,) which was yearly demanded of every faithful Israelite for the support of the Temple at Jerusalem<sup>e</sup>, was claimed of the Son of Man. Concerning this payment, it had been enacted that the rich should not give more, and the poor should not give less than half a shekel<sup>f</sup>:—a remarkable regulation, “as containing the mystery that the same price of Redemption must be paid for all; for this it represented. It was for each ‘an atonement,’ ‘a ransom,’ for his soul unto the LORD<sup>g</sup>.’” “They that received tribute money” applied accordingly to Simon Peter,—whose precedence in rank (*though not in authority*) may have been the cause why these men spoke to *him* rather than to any other of the Apostles. The question asked, sounds like a respectful inquiry addressed to all, as to what was the practice and pleasure of ‘their Master’ in this respect: and there is no need of supposing a sinister intention, as on the memorable occasion when the Pharisees and Herodians inquired whether it was “lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not<sup>h</sup>?”

The two inquiries seem in fact to have been

<sup>e</sup> On the authority of Exodus xxx. 13. This payment is alluded to in 2 Kings xii. 4, and 2 Chron. xxiv. 5, 6, 9.

<sup>f</sup> Exodus xxx. 15. <sup>g</sup> Rev. I. Williams. <sup>h</sup> St. Matth. xxii. 17.

wholly distinct in their object, as well as in their character. *That* was a Civil demand; *this* a Religious one. On both occasions indeed, 'tribute' is spoken of; but perhaps on neither occasion is 'tribute' strictly meant. A payment levied by *the State*, and due to *the Emperor*, (answering in nature somewhat to our *Taxes*,) was the subject of discussion *then*. A payment levied by the officers of *the Temple*, and due to God, (answering rather to our *Church-Rates*,) was the matter of inquiry *now*.

These payments were further distinguished in respect of the absolute manner in which *Cæsar's* tribute was exacted of the Jews by their Roman masters; while the half-shekel, which was due to God, and which could not be legally *enforced*, was simply applied for, by officers of their own nation. Let it be recorded to the honour of the Jews, whether those of Palestine or those of the Dispersion<sup>i</sup>, that however poor they may have been, however far removed from their native land, they gladly and faithfully paid the yearly sum which they regarded as due to their God. "In almost every city, even those beyond the limits of the Roman Empire, there was a sacred Treasury for the collection of these dues: and then, at certain times, there were messengers selected from among the worthiest, to carry the collected money to Jerusalem<sup>k</sup>."

To return however to the subject more immediately before us;—It may be that our LORD on

<sup>i</sup> Addressed by St. Peter in his First Epistle,—i. 1.

<sup>k</sup> Trench on the Parables.

His way to the House, walking in advance of His Disciples, (as His custom was,) had in His Divine Wisdom, *passed by* the well-known officials who stood ready to receive the Temple-tax from every willing Israelite. Appealing to Simon, they seem to say,—“How then? Doth not your Master pay the half-shekel?”

25 He saith, Yes.

It cannot escape notice how promptly St. Peter answered ‘Yes’ to this inquiry. Nor is it hard to draw the obvious inference from the Apostle’s answer. He knew that he was answering for One who never cavilled at demands such as these; who ‘lived peaceably with all men<sup>1</sup>’; who rendered “to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour<sup>m</sup>.” How should such an One refuse to pay what was usual towards the support of the Temple of God?

Wherefore, leaving the men, he entered the house, (*his own* probably,) where JESUS was, either in order to ascertain whether he had answered rightly,—or, (which seems more likely,) to convey to his LORD the tidings of what had taken place. And when he was come into the house, JESUS prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the Kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

<sup>1</sup> Romans xii. 18.

<sup>m</sup> Romans xiii. 7.

How must it have astonished the Apostle to find himself thus in the presence of Him who knoweth all things ! Simon Peter had not opened his lips to speak, ere his Master, by the question He asked, convinced him that He was privy to what had been passing outside the House.

Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. JESUS 26 saith unto him, Then are the children free.

The high argument of our Blessed LORD on this occasion may not be overlooked. He reasons with His favoured Apostle thus :—These men have sent thee to ask Me for the money which is claimed of the people of the Land, towards the support of God's Temple ; thereby implying that *I* am as one of *them*. But thou well knowest that even *the Kings of the Earth*<sup>a</sup> take no custom or tribute from their own sons. Consider therefore with thyself whether I am not justly free from this payment which is levied in the Name of *the King of Heaven* ; since the Temple is none other than the House of the Living God,—whose own Son thou hast already confessed Me to be. Hath He not 'appointed' Me "heir of all things<sup>o</sup> ?" am I not 'as a Son' over Mine "own House?" . . . It may be added, — How shall "One greater than the Temple<sup>a</sup>," contribute towards the Temple's support ? How shall He, who is to be the ransom for every other soul, give the money which Moses

<sup>a</sup> Compare Ps. ii. 2.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. iii. 6.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. i. 2.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xii. 6.

commanded, as 'a ransom' for *His own*?—Here then, we have a distinct assertion of the Godhead of CHRIST. But a *direct proof* follows :

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them,

Let the whole course of the Divine Reasoning be duly noticed. Here was a mistaken and an unfair demand,—one which might have been reasonably resisted, and safely set aside. Nevertheless what says our Great Example? Lest I should be casting a stumbling-block in their way by declaring the awful reality whereby I am properly exempt from this payment: lest again, by refusing their demand, I should seem to be casting a slight on Religion, should awaken angry feelings and uncharitable suspicions,—unfounded indeed and untrue, yet injurious alike to Me and to them;—"lest we should *offend* them,"

go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the Fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee.

How obvious is the practical lesson here conveyed to him who desires to follow in his LORD's footsteps,—that a claim which may not only be disputed, but even proved unjust, should yet be discharged, to avoid offence!

<sup>r</sup> See Exodus xxx. 12.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

In these words then, the Evangelist concludes his narrative. He does not tell us what was said : nor is it needful that he should. Simon followed by the Eleven Apostles, proceeded to the edge of the Lake ; and, nothing doubting, cast a hook.\* As anciently a whale, so now one of the lesser creatures which 'pass through the nets of the seas', is prompt to obey the bidding of the CREATOR. The hook is no sooner cast, than it rises to the surface, and is captured in the net : and in his mouth is found a piece of silver called a 'stater,' in value about thirty pence with which St. Peter pays jointly for himself and his LORD.

He gave unto them [*as a ransom*] for Me and —“ Here comes out the deeper meaning of the LORD not paying for Himself only, but for those who represent all the faithful. He came to bear the same yoke with men, that they might enter into the same freedom which was His†.”

Another excellent Writer, already quoted, observes,—“ As the Virgin Mother made the offering of the turtle-doves, though she needed no expiation from that Birth ; as CHRIST submitted to Circumcision, though He needed no expiation,—and to Baptism, though He needed nothing : so now does He pay the token of Redemption,” who came to redeem Mankind. We notice that this Miracle,—(which is found



only in St. Matthew's Gospel; St. Mark omitting the transactions which redound to St. Peter's honour<sup>a</sup>;)—is one of the three in the second Adam asserts His "dominion over fish of the sea." Was not *that* dominion His 'in the beginning?' 'the fish of the sea' being mentioned *before* either 'the fowl of the air,' or 'the cattle<sup>x</sup>.'

It is still more worthy of notice how significant an assertion of "His eternal power and His eternal head<sup>y</sup>," was *the manner* in which our BLESSED SAVIOUR satisfied the demand recorded in the Law, as well as how splendidly the Miracle by which He paid the tax, compensated for the offering offered to His Divine Majesty, by its exhibition. How convincing a proof was it, of that Father-Sonship which Simon Peter had already confessed, and which our SAVIOUR had been just now declaring to Simon Peter<sup>z</sup>! And it is ever told in the History of our LORD's Life. Some time before He ascended into Heaven is ever found to appear, when He was most 'despised and rejected,' most 'acquainted with grief<sup>b</sup>,' 'a worm and no man<sup>c</sup>.' Did not Angels and a Star herald His Birth in a Manger, and the quaking Earth and darkened Sun and Moon foreboding tidings that He was expiring on the Cross?

<sup>a</sup> See the note prefixed to St. Mark i.    <sup>x</sup> See Genesis i. 26.  
<sup>y</sup> Rom. i. 20.    <sup>z</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 20.    <sup>z</sup> See above, ver.

<sup>b</sup> Isaiah liii. 3.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. xxii. 6.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*1 CHRIST warneth His Disciples to be humble and harmless : 7 to avoid offences, and not to despise the little ones : 15 teacheth how we are to deal with our Brethren, when they offend us : 21 and how oft to forgive them : 23 which He setteth forth by a parable of the King, that took account of his servants, 32 and punished him, who shewed no mercy to his fellow.*

XVIII. AT the same time came the Disci- 1  
 ples unto JESUS, saying, Who is the great-  
 est in the Kingdom of Heaven ?

The "time" spoken of, will be discovered by a reference to the close of the foregoing Chapter. It was the occasion of our LORD's return to Capernaum, after a prolonged absence with His Disciples. It was the Autumn of the third and last year of His Ministry, shortly before the Feast of Tabernacles.—When the honour which had recently befallen three of the Apostles<sup>a</sup>, and one of their number in particular<sup>b</sup>, is remembered, it will perhaps be less a matter of surprise that, about this time, "by the way, they had disputed among

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xvii. 1.      <sup>b</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 17 to 19 : xvii. 27.

themselves who should be the greatest<sup>c</sup> in Kingdom of which they had lately heard so much and to an actual view of the glories of which, of their number had been recently admitted after the Resurrection, the Disciples could not but have been surprised to see Him, saying, "LORD, wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel<sup>e</sup>," shall we wonder if they held wrong notions on the subject at the time spoken of in the text?

It is worth observing that though they had been disputing among themselves which of them was greatest, *that* is not the form which their inquiry they addressed to our LORD assumed. He indeed asked them, "What was it that you disputed among yourselves by the way<sup>f</sup>?" Conscience-stricken however, in the presence of One whom they knew to be so meek and lowly, they merely questioned by another. "Who" (they ask) "is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"

St. Mark says that, in reply to this question, "He sat down, and called the Twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all<sup>g</sup>:" in which our LORD is found to have almost repeated on two other occasions<sup>h</sup>.

2 And JESUS called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them,

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark ix. 34.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 19, 20.

<sup>e</sup> Acts i. 6. Consider St. Luke xxii. 29, 30.

<sup>f</sup> See St. Mark ix. 33.

<sup>g</sup> St. Mark ix. 35.

<sup>h</sup> St. Matth. xx. 26, 27, and xxiii. 11.

The thrice-happy object of the SAVIOUR's words on this occasion must have been more than an infant; since CHRIST is said to have '*called him* unto Him, and *set him in the midst*:' unlike that other occasion when He is merely related to have graciously taken the children "up in His arms<sup>i</sup>."

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except <sup>3</sup> ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It requires but moderate acquaintance with little Children to perceive how lofty a model our SAVIOUR CHRIST here sets before us. So truthful, guileless, and simple; so obedient and docile; so trustful and believing; so pure and loving; so forgetful of injuries, and grateful for kindness,—would He have *all* His Disciples to be. And those who exhibit no resemblance to this picture, "shall not [even] *enter* into the Kingdom of Heaven;" much less, occupy the place of "the greatest" in it.

But it is clear from the context, that the special attribute of Children which our SAVIOUR here recommends to the imitation of His Church, is their freedom from anything like Pride, and the desire of being preferred before others. Ambition is a passion which finds no place in *their* bosoms. Wherefore, little children are set before us evermore as patterns of Humility: and those who have allowed themselves in aspiring hopes, and vain

<sup>i</sup> St. Mark x. 16.

thoughts, and proud wishes, are directed by Master, who "took upon Him the form of vantage," and was "meek and lowly in heart," "become as little children," if they would into Bliss. They must convert, and turn selves,—or rather, yielding to the influence HOLY SPIRIT, must "be converted," and turn from the temper which is so hateful in God's if they would be highly esteemed in CHRIST'S lasting Kingdom. As it follows :

- 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself  
as this little child, the same is greatest in  
5 Kingdom of Heaven. And whoso shall receive  
one such little child in My Name  
receiveth Me.

A few words will be found on this subject  
note on St. Mark ix. 37.

- 6 But whoso shall offend one of these  
ones which believe in Me, it were better  
him that a millstone were hanged about  
neck, and *that* he were drowned in the  
7 of the sea. Woe unto the World because  
of offences ! for it must needs be that  
offences come ; but woe to that man by whom  
offence cometh !

These two verses are also found connected  
in an inverted order, in a different part of  
Luke's Gospel. With such solemn language

does the LORD 'make a hedge about<sup>n</sup>' the lowly, the poor, the meek, the righteous, and the young! He who 'offends them,'—that is, causes them to stumble or fall,—does it at his peril. Death by drowning were a far better portion than the bitter end which will be *his*<sup>o</sup>.

It cannot fail, in this sinful world, but what 'offences,' (hindrances to Faith and Obedience,) should come. Woe to that man, however, by whom the hindrance cometh!

Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend <sup>8</sup> thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into Life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And <sup>9</sup> if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into Life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Hell-fire.

This is given even more solemnly in St. Mark's Gospel, where several remarks have been offered on the subject,—to which the Reader is referred<sup>p</sup>.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these 10 little ones;

"Not *one*!" so minute is God's Providence.

for I say unto you, that in Heaven their

<sup>n</sup> Job i. 10.

<sup>o</sup> See more in the note on St. Mark ix. 42.

<sup>p</sup> See the notes on St. Mark ix. 43 to 48.

Angels do always behold the Face of My FATHER which is in Heaven.

Surely, the most wonderful revelation of any which our SAVIOUR hath made to us concerning the dignity of Little Children! 'Take heed that ye offend them not; *for* their Angels,' &c.: as if implying that the danger of incurring the displeasure of the Angels is, in itself, a terrible thing.

"*Their* Angels," can only mean that little children have Guardian-Angels, and are under the constant care of those glorious Beings whom God created upright; who have 'kept their first estate<sup>q</sup>,' and are ever in Heaven, where God is.

But the words which follow prove that even more than this is implied. When it is said that "*their* Angels do always *behold the face of the FATHER*,"—it is clearly taught that the "little ones" of whom CHRIST speaks, are committed to the care of *the highest order* of the Angelic Host: to those who (like Gabriel) continually "stand in the presence of God<sup>r</sup>," and gather glory from beholding the Light of His Countenance. The phrase seems to be taken from the Courts of Earthly Sovereigns, where the Counsellors of highest rank were said 'to behold the face of the King<sup>s</sup>:' and recalls our LORD's declaration to Nathanael concerning that free intercourse between Heaven and Earth which was about to be established: when Heaven should be open; and the

<sup>q</sup> St. Jude, ver. 6.

<sup>r</sup> St. Luke i. 19.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Kings x. 8. 2 Kings xxv. 19: (See the margin). Esther i. 14.

Angels of God should freely 'ascend and descend' between Earth and Heaven<sup>†</sup>.

The question—Whether all have their Guardian Angel? is, in part, answered by the text; for the guardianship of the just will not surely cease because the age of Childhood is past. The phrase 'little ones,' on our Lord's lips, denotes as many as have childlike hearts; that is, the lowly, the guileless, and the pure, whatever their age may happen to be. And the Apostle's well-known exclamation concerning the office of the Holy Angels,—"Are they not all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation<sup>‡</sup>?" must be allowed to establish the same doctrine, beyond all controversy. But whether each individual has his own several Guardian Spirit,—a Guardian Angel to himself,—as it is no where laid down in Scripture, and only once hinted at as a matter of Jewish belief<sup>‡</sup>, so can it only be maintained as a matter of pious opinion. Enough, surely, of a very surprising kind, has been revealed to us on this mysterious subject<sup>‡</sup>; and the Apostle hath left us a solemn warning, in connexion with the Angelic order of beings, against 'intruding into those things which we have not seen<sup>‡</sup>.'

"He gives yet another reason, weightier than the foregoing, why the little ones are not to be despised<sup>‡</sup>:"

<sup>†</sup> St. John i. 51.

<sup>‡</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>‡</sup> Acts xii. 15.

<sup>‡</sup> See Pa. xxxiv. 7: xci. 11. St. Luke xv. 7, 10,—where see note.

<sup>‡</sup> Col. ii. 18.

<sup>‡</sup> Chrysostom.



- 11 For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.

As much as to say, See that ye despise not one of these accepted little ones; for I have emptied Myself of My Glory,—‘made Myself of no reputation, and taken upon Me the form of a Servant’,—in order to save a World, ruined and undone. The saying recurs in St. Luke xix. 20. And to this reasoning, He adds a parable, the intent of which is to shew the Heavenly Shepherd’s concern for the very least of His flock which has gone astray.

- 12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains,

Rather, “Doth he not leave the ninety and nine upon the mountains<sup>d</sup>,” (for “the mountains” were grassy, and well adapted for the pasturing of sheep) “and goeth,”—

and seeketh that which is gone astray?

- 13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

The Parable of The Lost Sheep was twice delivered by our Lord. St. Luke relates it in his xv<sup>th</sup>. chapter<sup>e</sup>; St. Matthew, in this place. And it

<sup>e</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>d</sup> Compare the language of St. Luke xv. 4.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke xv. 3 to 7.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".



EVEN SO IT IS NOT THE WILL OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN, THAT ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES SHOULD PERISH.  
*St. Matthew's Evail 14.*

is observable that the same great point is brought out on *both* occasions,—namely, the excessive *joy* felt by the Good Shepherd on recovering the single sheep which He had lost: a subject which will be found sufficiently remarked upon in another place<sup>1</sup>.

The points of difference are few, but interesting. Here, the Shepherd is seen tending His flock upon the Mountains: there, upon the Waste. There, the sheep was simply said to be lost: here, it is declared to have “gone astray;” and either statement is *twice* repeated. There, a successful pursuit was assumed; for the Shepherd found His sheep,—laid it on His shoulders,—came home,—and called His neighbours to rejoice with Him: here, a doubt as to the result is thrown out. We are told how the Shepherd will feel towards His sheep—“*if so be that He find it.*”

There seems moreover to have been a slight difference of intention on the part of the Blessed Speaker, on the two occasions when He delivered this Parable. Here, CHRIST's care for each individual little one, seems to be the point to which our attention is chiefly directed.

Even so it is not the will of your FATHER <sup>14</sup> which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

He has described the conduct of an earthly shepherd: ‘Even so,’ (he adds,) ‘is your Heavenly Father supremely careful for the safety of the least lamb of His flock.’ And this concludes

<sup>1</sup> See the note on St. Luke xv. 7.

the train of thought which began at verse 11 : for it is implied that men may well ‘take heed that they occasion not the fall of one of these little ones ;’ to seek and to save whom, the Son of Man came into the World,—yea, for whom He died<sup>g</sup>.

- 15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

“By which, it is made plain,” (says one of the Fathers,) “that enmities are a loss to both sides : for CHRIST saith not ‘Thy Brother hath saved himself ;’ but,—‘Thou hast gained thy Brother ;’ which shews that both of you had suffered loss by your disagreement<sup>h</sup>.” “In saving another, Salvation is gained for ourselves also.”

A ‘Brother’ *in the Faith*, is here intended ; and it is clearly some very heinous offence which our LORD alludes to, since He presently directs that it shall be brought, (if need be,) before the authorities of the Church.

- 16 But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Rather “*the whole matter* may be established.” It was to be proved by the testimony of two or

<sup>g</sup> So St. Paul argues : Rom. xiv. 15, and 1 Cor. viii. 11.

<sup>h</sup> Chrysostom.

three witnesses, according to the provision of the Law<sup>i</sup>: and it is evident from what follows that these witnesses were to assist in bringing the offender to a sense of his duty.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the Church :

This is that "*rebuke before all*" of which St. Paul speaks in his First Epistle to Timothy<sup>k</sup>.

but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

By which words, our LORD is clearly giving rules for conduct *among Christians*. He alludes to wrongs sustained *within His Church*; and speaks of that Church as armed with powers of her own,—powers which are accordingly found in full operation in St. Paul's time<sup>l</sup>.

The consequence of "neglect to hear the Church," (as this saying of our LORD clearly implies,) can be none other than exclusion from Church-membership; being cut off from the body of the faithful. Not that a man becomes thereby excluded from the Church's sympathy: but by becoming like 'an heathen man,'—(one of those for whose Repentance and Conversion the Church toils night and day,)—he loses every privilege to which Baptism entitled him. And let none suppose that Excom-

<sup>i</sup> Deut. xix. 15. St. Paul has the same quotation: 2 Cor. xiii. 1.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Tim. v. 20.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Cor. v. 1 to 5, &c.; vi. 1 to 6. 1 Tim. i. 20, &c.

munication is a vain decree,—for, (the LORD of Heaven and Earth hath spoken it,)—

- 18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

Whomsoever the Church regards as ‘a heathen man and a publican,’ she *binds*; but she *looses* him who, when reprov’d, neglects not to hear her admonition. . . . These memorable words will be recognised as having been addressed on a former occasion to Simon Peter<sup>m</sup>. They contain “an allusion very intelligible to the Apostles, as it *was* a power already exercised by the Jewish Synagogue; and taken from them, and conferred by CHRIST Himself on His Church, which is to be to the end<sup>n</sup>.”

“There is a power within the Church,” (observes Bishop Pearson,) “to cast those out who do belong to it; for ‘if any neglect to hear the Church,’ saith our SAVIOUR, ‘let him be unto thee a heathen man and a publican.’ By great and scandalous offences we may incur the censure of the Church of God; and while we are shut out by them, we stand excluded out of Heaven. For our SAVIOUR said to His Apostles, upon whom He built His Church, ‘Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.’”

<sup>m</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 19.

<sup>n</sup> Williams.

Not only will such sentences, passed by high and competent authority, be found to prevail with God; but the requests of two or three believers gathered together in His Name, shall be granted. As it follows,—

Again I say unto you, That if two of you <sup>19</sup> shall agree on Earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My FATHER which is in Heaven.

But it concerns all Christian men rightly to understand so gracious a promise. Let it be observed therefore, (1st.) that, in order to *prevailing* Prayer, they who thus unite, must be righteous: for “we know that God heareth not sinners<sup>o</sup>.” Next, (2nd.) that the gifts demanded of God must be in themselves *good*: for God is pledged only to “give *good things* to them that ask Him<sup>p</sup>.” Then, (3rd.) that Prayer must be faithful, earnest, and persevering: for “men ought always to pray and not to faint<sup>q</sup>.” Lastly, (4th.) that the end proposed must be just and holy: for St. James notes it as the special reason why men ‘ask and receive not,’ because they ‘ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts<sup>r</sup>.’

For where two or three are gathered together <sup>20</sup> in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.

<sup>o</sup> St. John ix. 31. Compare 1 St. John iii. 21, 22.

<sup>p</sup> St. Matth. vii. 11. <sup>q</sup> St. Luke xviii. 1. St. James i. 5, 6, 7.

<sup>r</sup> St. James iv. 3.



Take notice that this promise is made to only as meet *in CHRIST's Name*: that is, to as gather together in the manner which H directed, and for a purpose which He will ap These two verses are accordingly made the p CHRIST's Church, day by day, at the concl both of Morning and Evening Prayer\*.

The Divine Discourse having been thus cluded, St. Peter comes forward to ask a que —seemingly with reference to what our LOR said in verse 15: for, in substance, what pre might evidently be expressed in the lan which is found on our SAVIOUR's lips on a s quent occasion: "If thy Brother trespass ag thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive h

- 21 Then came Peter to Him, and said, I  
how oft shall my Brother sin against  
22 and I forgive him? till seven times? J  
saith unto him, I say not unto thee, 1  
seven times: but, Until seventy times s

St. Peter perhaps thought that he was pr ing a truly Evangelical measure of Forgive but his LORD taught him that Forgiveness s know no bounds. For CHRIST does not here a number; but signifies something without li "Be ye kind one to another," (says the Apo "tender-hearted, forgiving one another, ev

\* See the Prayer of St. Chrysostom.

† St. Luke xvii. 3. Compare also the next verse. St. xviii. 22, with St. Luke xvii. 4.

‡ Compare Gen. iv

GOD for CHRIST's sake, hath forgiven you<sup>2</sup>." And it is observable that the self-same example of forgiveness which St. Paul thus proposes, is set before us by our SAVIOUR CHRIST in the Parable which follows. Its purpose is "to make clear that when God calls on man to forgive, He does not call on him to renounce a right; but that man has in fact no right to exercise in the matter:" and it is difficult to imagine how this could have been more forcibly shewn, than in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven li- 23  
kened unto a certain King, which would take account of his servants.

It is needless to point out who are represented by the 'certain King,' and by 'the Servants' in this Parable. The 'King of Kings' 'takes account' of us, as often as by illness or by misfortune, by conscience, by His Scriptures, or in any other way, He brings our sins home to our remembrance; alarms the soul, and awakens the sinner to a sense of his great danger. The Psalmist was thus dealt with, when he exclaimed,—“Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me<sup>2</sup>.”

And when he had begun to reckon, one 24  
was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iv. 32. Compare Col. iii. 13.   <sup>2</sup> Rev. xix. 16.   <sup>2</sup> Ps. xl. 12.

A very enormous sum ; and which will shew that this person must have been one of the King's chief officers. There is no need of supposing that these were talents *of gold* :. but ten thousand talents of silver even, would have been equivalent to about two millions of English money. It was perhaps the tribute due from many Provinces for several years, or the revenue of an entire Province, in respect of which he proved himself a defaulter. Though mention is made of ' a servant of the King,' therefore, it is plain that the warning of the Parable is derived from the conduct of one who belonged to the highest rank of Society.

" Since the Law is set forth in *ten* precepts (says the great Father of the West,) " let us consider that the '*ten* thousand talents' which a man owed, denote all things which can be required under the Law."—Language derived from verbal obligation, and especially terms which are in common use, and are in common applicability only to debts of money, are constantly employed by our SAVIOUR to illustrate the position in which we stand towards God. Consider the very language of the LORD'S PRAYER is found set down in St. Matthew's Gospel :

examples, relationships; these all are talents to be accounted for<sup>b</sup>!" The World is so well aware of this, that it has learned (from Scripture) to call a man's abilities, his *talents*.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his <sup>25</sup> lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

Neither Type nor Parable is always capable of being pressed in its minuter details. Followed out beyond a certain point, the most obvious Type, the very plainest Parable, conducts us into the region of Fancy; where wild conjecture must supply the place of rational criticism. In the present instance, it may fairly be doubted if any allegorical meaning is to be sought for in this mention of the Servant's "wife and children;" especially when it is remembered that the hardship which the man was about to incur, was the established penalty under the Jewish Law, of a Debtor who had not wherewith to pay. The Creditor, in such case, took his family as bondsmen<sup>c</sup>. The heavy penalty of Sin is therefore here indicated,—namely, to be 'sold into the hands of the Enemy<sup>d</sup>.' "Which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" (asks the LORD by His Prophet :) "Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves<sup>e</sup>."

<sup>b</sup> Rev. I. Williams. \* Levit. xxv. 39, 41; compare 2 Kings iv. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Consider Judges ii. 14: iii. 8: iv. 2: x. 7.

<sup>e</sup> Isaiah l. 1. Consider Ps. xliv. 12.

- 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

To fall down with the face to the earth, before a person high in authority, is in the East an usual act of homage,—or, as it is here termed, of ‘worship’. . . In his terror, the servant promises to ‘pay all,’ if he may but have his sentence remitted: but the defaulter in such a sum *cannot* pay all. “He must let *that* alone for ever!”

- 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

The command that he should be sold, therefore, (‘and his wife, and children, and all that he had,’) “issued not of cruelty, but of unspeakable tenderness. For by these terrors, his lord sought to bring him to plead that he might not be sold<sup>k</sup>:” which actually happened, and with the blessed result which has been just now laid before us. Nay: the largeness of the creditor’s *Love* is the thing which here most strikes us. The servant asked only for a short respite, and engaged to pay the whole of his debt in the end. But his lord grants him more than he even dared to ask: for he freely cancels the entire obligation, and forgives him all.

“The severity of God only endures till the Sinner is brought to recognize his guilt. It is

<sup>i</sup> Ps. xlix. 8.

<sup>k</sup> Chrysostom.

indeed only Love in disguise. Having done its work, having brought Man to the acknowledgment of his guilt and misery, it reappears as grace again; granting more than had either been asked or hoped; loosing the bands of sin, and letting the prisoner go free."

And yet "he did not remit the debt till he had 'taken account:' because he desired that the other might be made aware how great a debt he was forgiven; and might thereby become the more merciful towards his fellow-servants."

But the same servant went out, and found 28 one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

There had been no such peremptory language used towards himself, by his lord, in the first instance: much less had he sustained any such savage treatment. This stern demand, it was reserved for *him* to make of his fellow-servant, a going out from the presence of his lord!

Observe, that by 'fellow-servant' is here meant one who, like himself, was a servant in respect to the 'King' mentioned in verse 23. 'An hundred pence' are to 'ten thousand talents' (speaking roughly) as one to a million: and this sets forth, as far as numbers reasonably may, the disproportion between the trespasses committed against us by our fellow men, and which *we* are called upon to

forgive; and those which ALMIGHTY God  
'frankly forgiven' us, 'forasmuch as we have  
to pay.' There is, in truth, scarcely any  
between the respective amounts. It is as  
of water in comparison of the boundless ocean

- 29 And his fellowservant fell down  
feet, and besought him, saying, Have  
patience with me, and I will pay thee all

\* The plea was the self-same which he had  
urged so successfully himself. But neither  
recollection of his lord's kindness, nor his  
recent misery, nor the sight of one poor  
self, in trouble,—made any impression  
on his hard heart. "He does not even respect the  
words which had saved himself: for it follows

- 30 And he would not: but went and came  
into prison, till he should pay the debt

He not only failed to forgive him, but he  
not even 'have *patience*.' "He went"  
of Cain, from natural piety, and brotherly  
love,—*went* and cast him into prison<sup>1</sup>."

- 31 So when his fellowservants saw what  
was done, they were very sorry, and came  
told unto their lord all that was done

Rather, "declared fully" to their lord.

'Wrath' against Sin is the proper attribute  
of God<sup>m</sup>. 'Sorrow' is for men. The 'fruit'

<sup>1</sup> Rev. I. Williams.

<sup>m</sup> See below, the note on

VIII.] . ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

ants<sup>n</sup> tell their LORD all that is done,—‘crying  
day and night unto Him<sup>o</sup>.’

Then his lord, after that he had called 32  
him, said unto him,

“Called him,” (as it has been remarked with  
obvious truth,) “by the sentence of Death, and  
made him pass out of this World.” The LORD, at  
the Judgment Day, will say unto such an one,—

“Thou wicked servant,

Observe, that the lord did not chide his servant  
for owing him ten thousand talents. He neither  
called him ‘wicked,’ nor even reproached him :  
but simply was about to suffer him to incur the  
known penalty of the Law,—which is “holy ; and  
the Commandment holy, and just, and good<sup>p</sup>.”  
It is his cruel treatment of his fellow-servant  
which draws forth the language of reproach : “O  
thou wicked Servant,”—

“I forgave thee all that debt, because thou  
desiredst me : shouldest not thou also have 33  
had compassion on thy fellowservant, even  
as I had pity on thee ?

‘*Thou wert forgiven* : shouldest thou not at  
least have *had compassion*<sup>q</sup> ?’ “Observe that the  
silt laid to his charge is not that, needing  
mercy, he refused to shew it ; but that *having*  
*received* mercy, he remains unmerciful<sup>r</sup>.”

<sup>n</sup> Rev. vi. 11.

<sup>o</sup> St. Luke xviii. 7.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. vii. 12.

<sup>q</sup> See above, the note on ver. 30.

<sup>r</sup> Trench.



We are directed to say daily, "Forgive us trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." But this parable reminds us of the position under which we lie, so to "forgive them trespass against us;" namely, because *we* already *been forgiven*.

Take notice that no answer of the unmerciful Servant is recorded. He seems to have 'speechless'. By which, says an ancient Version, "it is shewn that in the Day of Judgment, excusing of ourselves will be impossible." We must be, and we shall *know* ourselves to be, without excuse before God.

And so, "because kindness had not been shown him, it remains that he be corrected by judgment. As it follows,"—

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

Not merely 'delivered him,' but '*was angry*' which was not said before. As a debtor, he incurred a penalty; but as one who 'had not repented,' he deserved a heavy punishment: for, it is written, "He shall have judgment without mercy." And "who takes vengeance on Sinners, then He is angry." "be 'wroth.'"

'The tormentors' must be those evil Spirits who inhabit the 'place of torment'; 'the Devils'

\* St. Matth. xxij. 12.

\* 2 Sam. i.

\* St. James ii. 13.

\* St. Luk

angels', as it is elsewhere said. The term is used from a usage in respect of debt, to our Law is an utter stranger.—And for long was the condemned Servant delivered to that accursed bondage? "Till he should *that was due*." But could this *ever* be? certainly; for "there is no work, nor deliverance, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave." inner on whom God denounces that awful curse,—“Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt not come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing<sup>a</sup>,”—must be condemned to eternal torment. In this place, therefore, has the well-known meaning, already explained<sup>b</sup>, and which it has in so many other parts of Scripture<sup>c</sup>. It does not indicate the time when the punishment *will cease*: but the time up to which the punishment *will continue*.

And says, 'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven<sup>d</sup>.' He forgave *you*; therefore do *ye* 'Forgive.' If you forgive not, I will call you back and again the whole sum which before I had forgiven<sup>e</sup>. So far an ancient Father<sup>e</sup>; in allusion to the obvious, and very remarkable circumstance, that the Servant was not imprisoned, after all, for cruelty; but for the very debt which, in the present instance he had been forgiven. This very thing opens a difficult question, in respect of

<sup>a</sup> Matth. xxv. 41.      <sup>b</sup> Eccl. ix. 10.      <sup>c</sup> St. Matth. v. 26.

See the note on St. Matth. i. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Besides St. Matth. v. 26: xxviii. 20. Ezra iv. 5, &c.

<sup>e</sup> Luke vi. 37.

<sup>f</sup> Augustine.

the forgiveness of sins. The true way to meet it seems to be to point out that though the gifts of God are without repentance<sup>f</sup>, yet that when Man, by heinous Sin, breaks his Baptismal Covenant, and cuts himself off from Communion with CHRIST, he thereby cancels the deed which assured him of Pardon; falls back into a state of Nature; and thus incurs the penalty of the old sins which were actually forgiven him. In this case, it is not God who revokes His gift; but Man who *refuses to accept it*.

- 35 So likewise shall My heavenly FATHER do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Our Divine Master will have no *pretended* reconciliation. The forgiveness which He requires must be *from the heart*; or He will not allow it to be any forgiveness at all.—How surprising are the many injunctions we meet with in the Gospel concerning Forgiveness of Injuries! It would seem that an unforgiving temper must be one of the greatest snares to which our fallen nature is exposed. The same observation has been already forced upon us; namely, when we were taking a review of our Blessed LORD's Teaching as contained in the Sermon on the Mount<sup>g</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. xi. 29.

<sup>g</sup> See the note on St. Mark vii. 27, near the foot of p. 181.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

2 CHRIST *healeth the sick*: 3 *answereth the Pharisees concerning divorcement*: 10 *sheweth when Marriage is, necessary*: 13 *receiveth little Children*: 16 *instructeth the Young Man how to attain Eternal Life*, 20 *and how to be perfect*: 23 *telleth His Disciples how hard it is for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God*, 27 *and promiseth reward to those that forsake any thing to follow Him*.

XIX. AND it came to pass, *that* when Iesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the parts of Judæa beyond Jordan;

And thus our LORD in the course of His Ministry will be found to have traversed every part of the holy Land, and for a time to have made His abode in each great division of the Country. Often in Galilee, and once as far as Tyre and Sidon, we have lately seen Him on the Eastern side of the Jordan also, as far northward as the ancient Dan. He traversed Samaria, and abode at Sychar<sup>a</sup>. In Judæa, and at Jerusalem, (at Bethany also,) He is often heard of: here, He is found in 'the coasts of Judæa,' whither He had proceeded 'by the farther side of Jordan'<sup>b</sup>. That is, He had come through

<sup>a</sup> St. John iv. 5 and 43.

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark x. 1.

Peræa, and was now in that part of Judæa which lay on the Eastern side of the river.

- 2 and great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there.

“And, as He was wont,” (adds St. Mark,) “*He taught them again<sup>c</sup>:*” for He was the Physician of souls,—by His *Works* confirming His *Words*. . . . It seems to have been well-known where He was: for it follows,—

- 3 The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his Wife for every cause?

These were doubtless envoys from Jerusalem, sent by the Sanhedrin, (the chief Council of the nation,) with the accursed object of molesting the Holy One. Their present inquiry seems to have been intended to betray Him into some statement which might be thought contrary either to the laws of Chastity, or to the Law of Moses. But it can scarce be doubted that it was so contrived as to make the Divine Teacher obnoxious to a powerful section of their body; for it concerned a question which is known to have been much disputed in the Jewish Schools, and which had divided them into parties. Some of the Rabbis taught that on *any* pretext, however frivolous, wicked, or absurd, Divorce was allowable,—provided only it were effected in due form.

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark x. 1.

And He answered and said unto them, <sup>4</sup>  
Have ye not read, that He which made *them*  
at the beginning made them Male and Fe-  
male ;

Our LORD refers to what is written in Genesis i. 27, and v. 2. A learned Father remarks upon it, that by this text alone, our LORD convinced them of their error: "for He said not '*male and females,*' (which was what was sought by the putting away of the first;) but, '*male and female;*' imply-  
only *one* tie in wedlock<sup>d</sup>."

and said, For this cause shall a man leave <sup>5</sup>  
Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his  
Wife: and they twain shall be one flesh ?

These words therefore are to be regarded as the utterance of GOD; though, as they stand in the Book of Genesis<sup>e</sup>, they seem to have been actually spoken by Adam<sup>f</sup>. Doubtless, (as St. Polycarp is thought to have remarked,) our first Father spake prophetically,—the Spirit of GOD moving him to deliver words the full import of which would not be seen for 4,000 years.—Our SAVIOUR here republishes the Law of Nature; and sets GOD's earlier decree, against the permission which was afterwards given in consequence of the hardness of men's hearts. Concerning the form of the expression, the Reader is referred to the note on St. Mark x. 7.

<sup>d</sup> Jerome.

<sup>e</sup> Gen. ii. 23, 24.

<sup>f</sup> Consider Acts xxviii. 25. Heb. ix. 8: iv. 4, &c.

“When He had thus brought forward the words and facts of the old Law, He then interprets with authority, and lays down a Law, saying,”—

- 6 wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

“He brings in God yet again; shewing that it is both against Nature and God’s Law to put away a wife: against Nature,—because ‘one flesh’ is therein divided: against Law,—because God hath joined and forbidden to sunder them<sup>ε</sup>.”

- 7 They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

Referring to the precept found in Deuteronomy xxiv. 1, 2.—Our Lord explains that this was only in consequence of “that stubborn disposition which made them incapable of obeying a purer and more perfect law.”

- 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your Wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Such was the excuse made by CHRIST, in His unspeakable Wisdom, for His ancient Servant. “By this, He clears Moses from their charge, and retorts it all upon their own head.” To protect a despised Wife from the cruelty of an unfaithful

<sup>ε</sup> Chrysostom.

Husband, Moses had '*suffered*' (not '*commanded*,') that she should be 'put away:' "but from the beginning, it was not so."

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery:

Whereby He not only repeals the permission given by Moses, but delivers a new Law with the authority of a Lawgiver: "*I say unto you*,"—as in the Sermon on the Mount<sup>b</sup>. The circumstance was remarkable; and accordingly, obtains special notice from the Apostle, when he is treating of such matters<sup>i</sup>.—"It is fornication alone which destroys the relationship of the Wife; for when she has divided one flesh into two, and has separated herself by fornication from her Husband, she is not to be retained<sup>l</sup>."

and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

"He says this to the terror of him that would take her to wife; for the Adulteress would have no fear of disgrace." Doubtless, this entire sentence concerning Divorce was peculiarly unpalatable to the unholy men who came 'tempting Him.' Consider St. Luke xvi. 14 and 18.

His Disciples say unto Him, If the case of the Man be so with *his* Wife, it is not good to marry.

<sup>b</sup> See St. Matthew vii. 29, and the note there.

<sup>i</sup> See 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

<sup>l</sup> Jerome.



A very strange rejoinder, surely ! Had then Jewish heart become so depraved and harder that the thought of Marriage without the priviledge of Divorce, was intolerable ? Truly, the Disciples herein shewed that they partook of the general blindness which had befallen their nation.

- 11 But He said unto them, All *men* can receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.

That is,—To remain unmarried, is a precept which cannot be acted upon by all ; “but only by those to whom the power of abstaining from marriage is given.” “Every man,” (says the Apostle,) “hath his proper gift of God,—after *this* manner, and another after *that*.”

Our LORD proceeds to mention three different ways by which men might have the power bestowed,—namely, by nature ; or by violence ; or by choice.

- 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother’s womb : and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men : and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven’s sake.

That is, “Which have denied themselves liberty of marriage, in order to be enabled thereby to devote themselves more entirely to the service of God.”

\* 1 Cor. vii. 7. See also what follows.

of GOD<sup>1</sup>:"—Then, with reference to 'the saying' spoken of in verse 11, our SAVIOUR adds,—

He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

"The meaning is, Whosoever hath the power, however given him, of living without marriage, let him use that power if it seem good to him. These are words of permission, not of command<sup>m</sup>." According to the heading of the chapter,—our LORD 'sheweth when Marriage is necessary.'

The narrative proceeds with what seems like a beautiful continuation of the same subject.

Then were there brought unto Him little <sup>13</sup> Children, that He should put *His* Hands on them, and pray: and the Disciples rebuked them.

The desire that our LORD would "put His Hands on them, and pray," (that is, that He would *bless* them<sup>n</sup>,) may have arisen out of His commendation of little Children recorded in the former chapter<sup>o</sup>.

But JESUS said, Suffer little children, and <sup>14</sup> forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. And He <sup>15</sup> laid *His* Hands on them, and departed thence.

<sup>1</sup> Archdeacon Hale and Bp. Lonsdale,—referring to 1 Cor. vii. 32 to 35.

<sup>m</sup> See 1 Cor. vii. 7.—The quotation is from the source last referred to.

<sup>n</sup> Consider St. Mark x. 16.—This was done with Imposition of Hands. See Gen. xlviii. 13, 14, 17, 18.

<sup>o</sup> See St. Matth. xviii. 2 to 5.

The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark x. 13 to 16, for several remarks on this incident—CHRIST had now ‘gone forth into the way’.

- 16 And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have Eternal Life?

St. Mark says he “came *running*.” But he addressed our LORD as if He were a mere man. CHRIST therefore answers him as if He were indeed no more.

- 17 And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments.

That is, ‘If thou *desirest* to enter into Life.’

- 18 He saith unto Him, Which?

The young Ruler evidently supposed that our SAVIOUR spoke of some great and strange thing, when He bade him “keep the Commandments.” And so, indeed, He did; though the other had not the eyes to see it.

- JESUS said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,  
19 Honour thy Father and *thy* Mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Our LORD alluded to nothing new. He reminds him of the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth;

† St. Mark x. 17.

omitting only the tenth. "And if there be any other Commandment," (writes the Apostle,) "it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself<sup>1</sup>."

But *why* did our LORD omit the *tenth* Commandment? Was it not because *Covetousness* was the one thing which was keeping this young Ruler from CHRIST; and which virtually prevented him from obeying the invitation in verse 21?

The young man saith unto Him, All these 20 things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, 21

How kindly the words which follow were spoken, may be inferred from St. Mark's statement that JESUS "beholding him, *loved him*<sup>2</sup>." It is to be supposed from this very circumstance that there was much of good in this young man; but the reply we have just heard from his lips recalls painfully the remonstrance of the elder son in the Parable,— "Neither transgressed I at any time Thy Commandment<sup>3</sup>." He even adds, 'What lack I yet?' and 'knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked<sup>4</sup>.' . . . "JESUS" therefore said unto him,"—

If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come *and* follow Me.

<sup>1</sup> Romans xiii. 10,—quoting Levit. xix. 18.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark x. 21; where see the note.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xv. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Revel. iii. 17.

But how was this to make him 'perfect?' "Perhaps it may be that such an effort of Faith, capable of overcoming the great besetting sin, would carry him through all lesser temptations. Add to which, that our LORD's words must be taken in connexion. 'Give to the poor,' He says; and 'Follow Me.' This is surely Evangelical Perfection. The first is the love of man; the second is the love of GOD with all the heart. And in this, is the true and spiritual fulfilment of all the Commandments."

Nor must it be forgotten that "when CHRIST calls it '*perfection*' to sell all and give to the poor, He speaks according to the idiom of the Jewish nation, which thought it so: and He does but try whether this rich man, boasting of his exact performance of the Law, would aspire to that '*perfection*' which his countrymen so praised".

- 22 But when the Young Man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Our LORD had laid His finger on the one weak point in this young man's character. He was loving and chaste, honest and true, dutiful also to parents; yet had he made an idol of his great Wealth. He was a servant of Mammon, and therefore could not serve GOD<sup>x</sup>. How does the great Apostle seem to write of such as he, where he says,—“The love of

<sup>u</sup> Lightfoot.

<sup>x</sup> St. Matth. vi. 24; and the notes on St. Mark x. 24.

money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”  
On all that precedes, see also the notes on St. Mark c. 17 to 22.

Then said JESUS unto His Disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a Rich Man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It follows in St. Mark's Gospel,—“ And the Disciples were astonished at His words. But JESUS answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them *that trust in riches* to enter into the Kingdom of God?” It is *nearly* one and the same thing therefore, *to have* riches, and *to trust* in them. Which startling assertion, so far from revoking, or even softening down, our LORD delivers ‘again,’ and in yet stronger language:—

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.

This is a strong proverbial expression, denoting something which is *impossible*. Consider below, verse 26. ‘Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,’ in the case of *all*: but to the rich man it becomes so straitened, so narrowed, as to become like the eye of a needle. He also moves slowly, (like the camel,) for he carries an unwieldy burthen.

† 1 Tim. vi. 10.

‡ St. Mark x. 24.

25 When His Disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can  
 26 be saved? But JESUS beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Our LORD looked earnestly upon His Apostles as He said this; and if Judas did not feel the power of His look, it must have been because he turned away his eyes to avoid it.

Their question shewed how deeply they had entered into the meaning of their LORD's words. They understood that the 'rich' of whom He spake were not merely the *rich in possessions*, but the *rich in desires*, the *lovers of riches*,—whether they had them, or had them not. Thus then, out of a deeply painful sense of the difficulty of being *really* poor, they asked with amazement, '*Who then can be saved?*'

On all that precedes, see the notes on St. Mark x. 17 to 27; and on St. Luke xviii. 27.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto Him Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?

Simon, seeing the young Ruler depart, "very sorrowful: for he was very rich<sup>a</sup>," asked this question,—surely not one which the maturer Saint would have approved! Yet, note the gracious answer:

28 And JESUS said unto them, Verily I sa

<sup>a</sup> Augustine, referred to by Trench.

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xviii. 23.

into you, that ye which have followed Me, in the Regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of His Glory, ye also shall sit upon Twelve Thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

He says not "Ye twelve;" but "*Ye which have allowed Me<sup>b</sup>*,"—thereby excluding Judas. The sitting upon thrones' denotes that the Apostles should reign with CHRIST, and share His glory: and it is promised that they should 'judge the twelve tribes of Israel,' because they, the twelve heads of the spiritual Israel, would, by their Faith in MESSIAH, condemn the unbelief of the nation which had formally rejected Him.

All this is to be "in the Regeneration:" that is, at the end of the World,—when 'the Heavens, being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;' 'the Earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up<sup>c</sup>;' and GOD will create '*new Heavens and a new Earth<sup>d</sup>*.'

Nay, we ourselves, at the sound of the Archangel's trumpet, shall be raised incorruptible, and *be changed*. It will be *the Regeneration* therefore; the birth-pangs of Nature will have been felt<sup>e</sup>, and forgotten<sup>f</sup>: 'old things will have passed away; behold, *all things will have become new<sup>g</sup>*.'

<sup>b</sup> And see St. Luke xxii. 28.

<sup>c</sup> 2 St. Peter iii. 10, 12, 13.

<sup>d</sup> Compare Isaiah lxi. 17: lxvi. 22. Rev. xxi. 1, 27.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matth. xxiv. 8, (where see the note): Rom. viii. 22.

<sup>f</sup> St. John xvi. 21.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.



Into so awful a subject as Judgment to come, it is safest not to pry curiously. We know nothing more than hath been revealed, nor can know. The magnificent outlines traced in such passages as the present by the Hand of CHRIST Himself ("the Judge of all<sup>b</sup>") may well content us. It shall suffice further to remind ourselves of that exclamation,—“Know ye not that we shall judge Angels<sup>i</sup>?”: to point out that it proceeded from one who, though not numbered with the Twelve, was not behind the very chiefest Apostles<sup>k</sup>; and to suggest, with the greatest of the Fathers, that “in the number of Judges, therefore, are included as many as have left their all to follow CHRIST<sup>l</sup>.”

- 29 And every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit Everlasting Life.

See on St. Mark x. 30, and on St. Luke xviii. 30.

- 30 But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first.

Our Blessed LORD may be considered to have used this saying three times; namely, in St. Luke xiii. 30,—here<sup>m</sup>,—and in the 16<sup>th</sup>. verse of the ensuing chapter. For though, at first sight, these two latter instances might be considered to reckon

<sup>b</sup> Heb. xii. 23.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 5.

<sup>l</sup> Augustine.

<sup>m</sup> Parallel to St. Mark x. 31.

only one,—occurring as they do, the one at the beginning, the other at the end, of the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard,—yet, on closer examination, it will be perhaps found that they are by no means to be certainly so regarded. On either occasion, the proverb seems to have a distinct meaning; and we are reminded here, (as so often elsewhere,) that our LORD's words are like those precious stones which possess the singular property of presenting a different colour according to the different position in which they are displayed. The saying in question, which is very nearly repeated in chap. xx. 16, must doubtless be viewed on either occasion by the light of the sayings which go before it; and these are, (at least they seem to be,) very different.

When the proverb occurs in the next chapter, it seems to mean that the last hired shall fare like the first, and the first hired like the last<sup>a</sup>. But in his place it seems unmistakeably to have a somewhat different application. It sounds like a note of solemn warning. The proverb here, seems, in fact, to fulfil the same office which it fulfils in St. Luke iii. 30; namely, to convey a caution, (*much needed, no doubt, by us all*,) against supposing that the stimulation in which men are now held will of course revail hereafter. Was Judas Iscariot the only one who from being 'first' became 'last?' or was Lazarus (in the parable) the only one who, from being last, became first?—It seems scarcely a bold

<sup>a</sup> See the note on St. Matth. xx. 16.

suggestion that, after St. Peter's inquiry,—“What shall we,” (that is, we Twelve Apostles,) “have therefore<sup>o</sup>?” and the promise about the twelve thrones, which follows,—our LORD should have added this word of warning with a special eye to the Traitor Judas,—being ‘one of the Twelve<sup>p</sup>.’

The saying in question therefore, may perhaps be thus paraphrased :—

But beware how ye, who were the first to be hired into My Vineyard, presume thereupon; as if entitled to a higher reward, from having endured a greater share of heat and fatigue. As many as I shall call, to the end of the World, are destined to enter into one and the same state of Bliss. Nay, beware how ye build your hopes of future Happiness, at all, on your present privileges; and let as many as shall come after you, beware also. My promises are wholly conditional. When I come in the Evening of the World to reckon with My Servants, many of those who were first called, and occupied the first place in this Life, will find themselves thrust down into the lowest room; while those who were called latest, and regarded as least, will be exalted to the highest honour<sup>q</sup>.

Then follows a Parable, which seems to have special reference to *the time* when men are sent into the LORD's Vineyard. See the note on verse 16 of the ensuing chapter.

<sup>o</sup> St. Matth. xix. 27.

<sup>p</sup> St. Matth. xxvi. 47. St. Mark xiv. 10. &c. See above the note on ver. 26 : also on St. Matth. xxii. 12.

<sup>q</sup> See the note on the last part of St. Luke xviii. 14.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

1 CHRIST, *by the similitude of the Labourers in the Vineyard, sheweth that GOD is debtor unto no man*: 17 foretelleth His Passion: 20 *by answering the Mother of Zebedee's Children, teacheth His Disciples to be lowly*: 30 *and giveth two blind men their sight.*

THE parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, with which this chapter begins, seems at first sight one of the easiest of the parables; yet, on examination, it proves to be one of the hardest, if not the very hardest of all. The truth is, that while the *narrative* is of the simplest kind, its *application* is by no means obvious; even with the help which our Blessed Lord has Himself supplied in the short proverbial sentence with which it concludes.

Nearly the same saying goes immediately before the parable, if it was not actually meant to preface and introduce it; and the circumstance is far too remarkable to be overlooked. It is "as if it were intended that, by the Moral of it being thus given twice, at its beginning and again at its end, all who read or hear it should be sure of seeing and understanding the lesson which CHRIST meant that it should teach<sup>a</sup>." By the light of *that* saying, then ("a lamp shining in a dark place<sup>b</sup>," as

<sup>a</sup> Rev. W. Jacobson, D.D.

<sup>b</sup> 2 St. Peter i. 19.

St. Peter speaks,) let us study the parable. The words alluded to, and which conclude St. Matthew's *xix<sup>th</sup>*. chapter, are these: "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

XX. FOR the Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a Man *that is* an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into His Vineyard.

Who the Householder was, who, 'as soon as it was day,' went out to hire labourers into His Vineyard, scarcely requires telling. But the mark so often brought before us, is again recalled—that God loves under the image of an Husbandman to speak of Himself in His dealings with mankind<sup>c</sup>. The 'Vineyard' is the Church,—as our LORD Himself hath shewn by more than one parable<sup>d</sup>. His Disciples were familiar with this image from the writings of their ancient Prophets<sup>e</sup>.

2 And when He had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, He sent them into His Vineyard.

The Roman *Denarius* is spoken of, being of value about eightpence of our money. "Everlasting Life<sup>f</sup>" is doubtless intended thereby,—the common reward of all who have *wrought* in the

<sup>c</sup> See the note on St. Luke *iii.* 17.

<sup>d</sup> See St. Matthew. *xxi.* 33 to 43.

<sup>e</sup> Is. *v.* 1 to 7. Jer. *xiii.* 10. Ps. *lxxx.* 8 to 15.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matthew. *xix.* 29: St. Mark *x.* 30: St. Luke *xviii.* 30.

Vineyard; of all, that is, who have served God faithfully in their generation.

And He went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

That is, the place of general concourse and public resort. As contrasted with the Vineyard, which represents the Church, the Marketplace must stand for the World.

and said unto them; Go ye also into the Vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again He went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

He entered into covenant with those whom He hired at six in the morning. The labourers whom He hired at 9, at 12, and at 3, left Him to decide what their reward should be; and verily they found, at evening, that they had been serving a mostounteous Master.—It wanted only one hour to sunset when He went forth for the last time:—

And about the eleventh hour He went out, and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto Him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

From this part of the Transaction, the 'eleven hour' has passed into the ordinary language of mankind! It seems to have been generally assumed that the parable is of individual application; and that the close of a man's life, is the 'eleventh hour' of which CHRIST speaks.

But since the Parable teaches that they who were hired at the eleventh hour received exactly the same reward as those who sustained the whole burden and heat of the day,—the further belief has arisen that provided a man does but best himself, at however late a period of his life, he will prove equally blessed in the end, with the most faithful of God's servants.—It may seem scarcely worth while to advert gravely to a notion like this—vaguely held, at best, and maintained seriously by none but the very weak or the very wicked; yet it is to be feared that such notions are much more widely spread, have taken deeper root, and are more wont to influence conduct more fatally than is generally believed.

Let it be pointed out therefore, that whatever truth there may be in the proposed application of the Parable, the condition of bestowing the penalty at the close of the day, must never be lost sight of. The excuse of those who were found standing idle at the eleventh hour, was, that *No man had hired them*. They were doing nothing, only because they had nothing to do. Let none therefore who begin to labour at the eleventh hour, presume to look for *the reward* of the labourers in the Parable, unless

they are able to offer *their excuse* also. And how can that excuse find a place on the lips of *any* living in a Christian land? . . . . But to return :—

So when even was come, the Lord of the s Vineyard saith unto His Steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

‘Last’ and ‘first :’—those words evidently supply the key-note of the entire discourse. So in verses 10, 12, and 14.—CHRIST is ‘the Steward’ set over God’s Household.

The labourers are paid *at evening*, according to the law that ‘the wages of him that is hired should not abide’ with his employer ‘all night until the morning<sup>s</sup>.’ And Judgment will come, in like manner, at the end of the World.

And when they came that *were hired* 9 about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first 10 came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

The first hired seem to have approached the Steward with thoughts like those of Simon Peter in ver. 27 of the preceding chapter,—‘Behold, *we* have done such and such things: what shall *we* have therefore?’ But there the resemblance ceases. “The labourers received every man a penny.”

<sup>s</sup> Levit. xix. 13. Compare Deut. xxiv. 15, and Job vii. 2.



- 11 And when they had received *it*, they  
murmured against the goodman of the  
12 house, saying, These last have wrought *but*  
one hour, and thou hast made them equal  
unto us, which have borne the burden and  
heat of the day.

The very terms of their complaint reveal their unworthiness. They are displeased at finding 'these last' 'made equal' unto themselves: they magnify their toil: they even 'murmur against the Goodman of the House.' Their conduct recalls the behaviour of the elder son in the parable of 'the Prodigal.' Indeed the two parables present some striking points of resemblance. What follows is not unlike the Father's reply to the elder Son's remonstrance:—

- 13 But He answered one of them, and said,  
Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou  
14 agree with Me for a penny? Take *that* thine  
*is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last,  
15 even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for Me  
to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine  
eye evil, because I am good?

That is, Dost thou look upon me with a jealous and an evil eye, because I am bountiful to others, and just to thyself?—Whereby, as the heading of the chapter states,—'CHRIST sheweth that God is debtor unto no man.'

The parable having been thus brought to a close,

he Divine Speaker is graciously pleased to subjoin a sentence which declares the drift of His mysterious teaching: on which, see St. Matthew xix. 30.

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

And yet, when the parable is considered, no such *inference* as this readily presents itself. 'The first' and 'the last' have not exchanged places,—as the proverb seems to imply, and as it is probably actually intended to imply on the other two occasions when our LORD employs it. Still less have any that were 'called' not been 'chosen;' for *all* have been rewarded, and all have been rewarded alike. We are compelled therefore to add a few words in order to remind ourselves of what seems actually to have been His precious meaning: namely,—that, in respect of Everlasting Life, the last shall be [rewarded like the] first, and the first [like the] last. Or, yet more briefly, that 'The last shall be [as the] first, and the first [as the] last.' For,—(according to that saying, 'Many be called, but few chosen,')—the result shall falsify the expectation. Many who deem themselves favoured with a special call, will find in the end that they are not chosen to the exalted privilege which they promised themselves.

Out of this, however, arise many hard questions. We are tempted to inquire, Did our LORD then deliver the parable simply to teach *that*? What bearing can such a lesson be supposed to have on

the Discourse which preceded? Above all, Is it then really so, that *the same reward* will be to all alike? Will Abraham and Moses, will St. John and St. Peter, drink no fuller cup than he who was assured of pardon on the cross, (at 'the eleventh hour,' as we say,) or any other accepted sinner mentioned in the Gospel? It is said elsewhere that "one star *differeth* from another star in glory<sup>b</sup>."

Further difficulties also present themselves. Is the parable of national, or of individual application? What is meant by the several hours of the day? And how does it happen that *all* the labourers are rewarded?

Satisfactorily to solve so many difficulties is evidently a hopeless task: but most of them admit of a sufficient answer. The Parable must be taken in connexion with the four concluding verses of the former chapter; and, (as already explained in the note on St. Matthew xix. 30,) it seems to have been designed, in the first instance, to repress any proud thoughts which the promise of 'twelve thrones' might have excited in the Apostles: shewing that the last hired shall be as the first; and the first as the last. The reward is *one*.

But a reward, though one and the same *in itself*, is not therefore one and the same *to those who receive it*. Meat and drink are a great gift to the hungry and thirsty: to those who neither hunger nor thirst, meat and drink afford small gratification. "Truly the Light is sweet, and a pleasant

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 41.

ing it is for the eyes to behold the Sun<sup>l</sup> :” but only if they be in a healthy state. The Light is a pleasure to an eye diseased. Every pleasure, in short, greater or less according to a man’s capacity for enjoying it : and “if the vision of God constitute the blessedness of Heaven, then, they whose spiritual eye is most enlightened will drink in most of His Glory.” In the meantime, “what the Lord said to Abraham, He says to all—‘I am thy exceeding great reward ;’ and He has no other reward to impart to any save this, namely *Himself*<sup>k</sup>.”

Concerning the application of the Parable, it seems safer to suppose that it may have at once a national and an individual bearing. Viewed in the former aspect, the Jews will be “the first ;” those, namely, with whom a covenant was made, who were hired “early in the morning,” and sent into the Vineyard<sup>l</sup> : and the disposition shewn in verses 10 and 12, (where see the note,) well accords with what we know of the temper of that remarkable people<sup>m</sup>. The Parable would therefore set forth the same general lesson which is conveyed by the reference so often given to the younger son over the elder<sup>n</sup>. The ultimate acceptance of the Gentiles, and their admission to equal privileges with Israel, is here prophetically shewn.

Considered as of personal and private application, it may be thought that the divisions of the

<sup>l</sup> Eccl. xi. 7.

<sup>k</sup> Trench on the Parables.

<sup>l</sup> Consider St. Matth. xxi. 28 to 31, &c.

<sup>m</sup> Consider Acts xxii. 21, 22, &c.

<sup>n</sup> See the note on St. Luke xv. 32.

Day alluded to, are periods of Human Life: in which case, Timothy,—who ‘from a child knew the Holy Scriptures’, and had been nursed in the Faith of the Gospel,—would be an example of one hired early; while the Repentant Malefactor is the best example which presents itself of one hired ‘at the eleventh hour.’ And the blessed assurance will then be conveyed that a converted and baptized Heathen, however advanced in years, if he does but faithfully perform His Master’s work while yet it is day, cherishes a well grounded hope of entering hereafter into perfect Bliss. Remember however what was said above, on verse 7.

But a more obvious *individual* bearing of the Parable is suggested by the context. The object seems to have been rather to discourage presumptuous hopes in the Apostles. They had been hired early; but they were not therefore to presume. The same everlasting portion awaited all who should ever be hired into the Vineyard of their Lord, even to the end of the World. And this, if we may humbly offer an opinion, seems to be the true scope and intention of the Parable.

Lastly,—as for *all* the Labourers obtaining a reward,—it really need not create perplexity. The present Parable evidently differs from those which contrast the end of the wicked and of the righteous. *Labourers entitled to reward* are supposed throughout. We must beware of inventing difficulties; or even going out of our way to discover

° 2 Tim. iii. 15.

p 2 Tim. i. 5.

em, when they are foreign to the main scope of  
 r LORD'S Discourse. Thus, the murmuring of  
 ose hired early, is a feature of the narrative  
 icht probably ought not to be pressed. It can-  
 t be thought to exhibit a feeling which finds  
 ace in Heaven. Rather is it a lively way of ex-  
 essing the anticipations of living men with re-  
 ect to the Life to come. And finally, since so  
 tle is said about those who were hired at the  
 ird, the sixth, and the ninth hour, neither surely  
 ed *we* make much of them either. Our atten-  
 on is specially invited only to 'the first' hired and  
 he last ;' and a short sentence both at the begin-  
 ng and the end of the Parable conveys a warning  
 specting these, which, as it concerned the Apostles,  
 doubtless will it concern the Church of CHRIST  
 keep steadily in view, to the end of Time.

And JESUS going up to Jerusalem 17

For the *last* time during His earthly Ministry,—

ok the Twelve Disciples apart in the way,  
 nd said unto them, Behold, we go up to 18  
 erusalem ; and the Son of Man shall be  
 etrayed unto the Chief Priests and unto  
 e Scribes, and they shall condemn Him to  
 eath, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles 19  
 o mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *Him* :  
 nd the third day He shall rise again.

The 'spiteful entreatment,'—the very 'spitting

on,'—is mentioned in the other Gospels<sup>q</sup>. See on this subject the note on St. Mark x. 34.

- 20 Then came to Him the Mother of Zebedee's children with her Sons, worshipping *Him*, and desiring a certain thing of Him.

Our LORD's recent allusion to the *Thrones* which the Twelve were destined hereafter to occupy<sup>r</sup> probably led to this remarkable incident ; which shews with what ambitious thoughts His followers were filled at this time<sup>s</sup>. Salome<sup>t</sup>,—whose husband Zebedee was probably now dead, (since she is called 'the Mother of the sons of Zebedee,')—brought her two sons James and John to CHRIST.

- 21 And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy Right Hand, and the other on the Left, in Thy Kingdom.

Her sons urged the same petition ; whence our LORD addresses His reply to *them* :—

- 22 But JESUS answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?

Implying that the place of highest honour is reserved for those who have been "made conforma-

<sup>q</sup> See St. Mark x. 34, and St. Luke xviii. 32.

<sup>r</sup> See St. Matth. xix. 28.

<sup>s</sup> Consider St. Matth. xix. 27. St. Mark ix. 33, 34.

<sup>t</sup> Compare St. Matth. xxvii. 56, and St. Mark xv. 40.

to His Death<sup>u</sup>." Hence St. Paul declares it to be 'a faithful saying,'—"If we *suffer*, we shall also *glorify* with Him<sup>x</sup>." "'The Cup' and 'the Baptism' are said with reference to the Two Sacraments by which we are, through His Passion, made one with CHRIST<sup>y</sup>."

They say unto him, We are able.

"When the Mother stood with her sons beholding CHRIST on the Cross, she better understood what it would be to be on His Right Hand, and on His Left, in His Kingdom,"—says a pious writer.

And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink<sup>23</sup> indeed of My Cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit at My Right Hand, and on My Left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of My FATHER.

Rather,—“Not Mine to give, save [to them] for whom it is prepared.” . . . But what a wonderful statement is that which goes before; namely, that St. John and St. James were to drink indeed of CHRIST'S Cup of Suffering, and to share His baptism of Blood! It might have been expected from this, that a bloody martyrdom awaited both brothers; yet are their histories, on the contrary, remarkably contrasted. St. James fell at once by the sword<sup>z</sup>,—the first of the Apostolic Body to suffer, or indeed, to die. St. John survived all the

<sup>u</sup> Phil. iii. 10.    <sup>x</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12.    <sup>y</sup> Williams.    <sup>z</sup> Acts xii. 2.



Apostles, and died a natural death, (it is thought) in extreme old age. This declaration of our SAVIOUR proves therefore, (as St. Polycarp is thought to have remarked long since,) that the Martyr's crown may be earned by those who have been Martyrs in *will* though not in *deed*: by those who have suffered long, and silently; who have distributed the bitterness of their Master's cup over years of banishment, persecution, and distress; and whom He has caused to share His Baptism of Blood, by methods known only to Himself—and *them*.

- 24 And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two Brethren.

“For the ambition of one creates envy in others who partake of the same feeling.”

- 25 But JESUS called them *unto Him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are  
26 great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you :

“That is, not content to rule over their subjects, they are severe and oppressive. But among you, who are Mine, these things shall not so be\*.”

- but whosoever will be great among you, let  
27 him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:  
28 even as the Son of Man came not to be min-

\* Origen.

istered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

“Men become masters in this world, that they may reduce their inferiors to slavery, and employ them for their own profit and glory. But men become governors in the Church, that they may serve those who are under them ; minister to them whatever they have received of CHRIST ; and not refuse even to die for their sake<sup>b</sup>,” if need so require.

The Reader will find the saying in verses 26, 27, repeated in chap. xxiii. 11. The sentiment has been already met with in St. Mark ix. 35,—where see the note. “How much soever you humble yourself,” (says Chrysostom,) “you cannot descend so far as did your LORD.”

And as they departed from Jericho, a great 29  
multitude followed Him. And, behold, two 30  
blind men sitting by the way side, when they  
heard that JESUS passed by, cried out, saying,  
Have mercy on us, O LORD, *Thou* Son of  
David.

St. Mark mentions only one of them,—whose name was Bartimæus<sup>c</sup>, and who was doubtless the more conspicuous of the two. Somewhat remarkable it may be thought that, on a previous occasion also, two blind men followed our SAVIOUR with the same cry, and were healed in the same manner as now,—namely, by a touch<sup>d</sup>. We make

<sup>b</sup> Pseudo-Chrysostom. <sup>c</sup> St. Mark x. 46. <sup>d</sup> St. Matth. ix. 27, 29.

their petition our own, as often as we repeat the suffrages at the end of the Litany<sup>e</sup>.

- 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace : but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O LORD, *Thou* Son of David.

Such are the hindrances which will be sometimes thrown in the way of those who desire to come to CHRIST. See on St. Luke xviii. 39, 40.

- 32 And JESUS stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto  
33 you? They say unto him, LORD, that our eyes may be opened.

“JESUS, therefore, (the same who said ‘To him that knocketh it shall be opened,’) stands still, and touches them, and gives them sight.” As it follows.

- 34 So JESUS had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes : and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

“They followed Him ;” perhaps all the way to Jerusalem,—and there availed themselves of their recovered powers to behold the most wondrous spectacle which ever Men or Angels looked upon.

Concerning this miracle, the Reader may think it worth while to refer to what has been offered in the places referred to at the foot of the page<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>e</sup> The Reader is referred to the note on St. Matth. ix. 27.

<sup>f</sup> On St. Mark x. 46 to 52, and St. Luke xviii. 35 to 43.

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF

St. Matthew's Gospel.

1 CHRIST *rideth into Jerusalem upon an ass, 12 driveth the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, 17 curseth the Fig-tree, 23 putteth to silence the Priests and Elders, 28 and rebuketh them by the similitude of the two Sons, 35 and the Husbandmen, who slew such as were sent unto them.*

Our LORD, having journeyed along the wild mountain road<sup>a</sup> which conducts from Jericho to Jerusalem,—followed by a large multitude of persons, among whom was ‘blind Bartimæus,’ whom He had so lately restored to sight,—at last reaches the district, east of Jerusalem, to which the name of Bethphage and Bethany was assigned. The Mount of Olives begins at that place. Accordingly, it is said,—

XXI. AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent JESUS two Disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto Me.

<sup>a</sup> See the note prefixed to St. Mark xi.

Everything begins to teem with mysterious import. Not without a reason, be sure, does St. Matthew, (addressing his Gospel especially to the Jews,) lay stress upon the Ass, as well as her Colt, which our SAVIOUR now required. He was about to enter His Capital; and He saw fit to do so, "meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass<sup>b</sup>;" the former, representing the Jewish Nation, which had long borne a yoke: the latter, the Gentiles,—wild as yet and unbroken, 'whereon never man sat<sup>c</sup>.' 'For the Jewish nation is spiritually the Mother of the Gentiles<sup>d</sup>.'

The sending of the Apostles is, in itself, a significant circumstance. CHRIST called the Gentiles by the ministration of His Servants,—who *brought* them to Him. He proceeds, in this place, to give the two Disciples their commission.

- 3 And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The LORD hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

Not '*Our Lord*,' or '*Your Lord*,' but '*The LORD*':—He who is supreme over all Creation, to whom all things belong, and whom all things serve; *He* 'hath need of them.'

- 4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying,  
5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy

<sup>b</sup> See below, ver. 5.

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark xi. 2, and St. Luke xix. 30.

<sup>d</sup> Jerome.

King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

'The Prophet' here quoted is Zechariah—ix. 9; but the first six words are from Isaiah lxii. 11. In Zechariah, the passage begins, 'Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion; shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem:' which jubilant words cannot have been changed for others by the SPIRIT, without a profound reason,—whether imparted to the Evangelist or not.

It has been beautifully remarked\*, that "as our LORD is now coming as King, and to claim His Kingdom, *that* one of His attributes is selected from Prophecy, to which alone of the Beatitudes the promise of an earthly inheritance is attached: 'Thy King cometh unto thee, *meek*.' His subjects are they to whom He has said, 'Learn of Me, for I am *meek*': and these shall reign with Him; for it is written, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.'"

Here then was an act which, while it fulfilled prophecy, was in itself prophetic. Chrysostom observes, "It is not merely on account of the mystery," however, "that our LORD rode on the ass; but in order to afford us a lesson of Humility."

And the Disciples went, and did as JESUS commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt,

\* By Williams.

† St. Matth. xi. 29.

‡ St. Matth. v. 5.

The ass and her colt came together. It was on the colt, (not on the ass,) that CHRIST rode, (for it was *the Gentiles* who were now about to submit to the easy yoke and light burden of CHRIST;) but the disciples brought both the ass and her colt; as *both ships* were needed at the second miraculous draught of fishes<sup>h</sup>.

and put on them their clothes, and they  
8 set *Him* thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

Some remarks on these verses will be found in the notes on St. Mark xi. 7 and 8. The people are found to receive CHRIST coming to the Feast of the Passover, with a solemnity which belonged to the Feast of Tabernacles.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest.

It is St. Matthew who alone mentions that the people shouted 'Hosanna' (that is, 'Save now') '*to the Son of David;*' as he is the Evangelist who specially records our LORD's descent from that Monarch. In the fulness of their rapture, they

<sup>h</sup> St. Luke v. 7.

oured forth a sentence from the cxviii<sup>th</sup> Psalm, verses 25 and 26. All the latter part of that Psalm, in fact, seems descriptive of our LORD's coming. See what is written on this subject in the notes on St. Mark.

'Hosanna *in the highest*,' is explained by the language of the cxlviii<sup>th</sup> Psalm:—"Praise Him in the heights: praise ye Him, all His Angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts." With which may be compared the language of the Angelic Hymn,—"Glory to God *in the highest*." Indeed, St. Luke says that the multitude, on this very occasion, cried (as the Angels did on the Night of the Nativity), "*Glory in the highest*."

And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the City was moved, saying, Who is this?

'Who is this King of Glory?' is also the cry of wonder when He enters the Heavenly Jerusalem. He remarks an ancient Father<sup>k</sup>, alluding to the language of one of the Psalms used on Ascension-day<sup>l</sup>.

And the multitude said, This is JESUS the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

So effectually did the prophecy that He should be called a Nazarene<sup>m</sup> find fulfilment. It has been already pointed out that the name of His father's City followed Him from the cradle to the grave<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>l</sup> St. Luke ii. 14.

<sup>j</sup> St. Luke xix. 38.

<sup>k</sup> Origen.

<sup>l</sup> Ps. xxiv. 8, 10.

<sup>m</sup> See the note on St. John i. 45.



12 And JESUS went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

“Among all the miracles wrought by our LORD,” (says an ancient Father,) “this seems to me the most wonderful; that one man, so humble in His worldly estate, and while the Scribes and Pharisees were exasperated against Him by seeing their gains thus cut off, was able to cast out such a multitude. Surely a flame darted from His eyes, and the majesty of the Godhead was radiant in His countenance<sup>m</sup>!” . . . . It will be remembered, that this was *the second* cleansing of the Temple effected by our LORD. The first, marked the beginning of His Ministry<sup>n</sup>: the present occasion marks its close. By the recurrence of so striking and significant a transaction we are reminded that, (like ‘the dream which was doubled unto Pharaoh twice,’) ‘the thing *was established by GOD*.’ Besides its mystical import, elsewhere noticed<sup>p</sup>, the act was symbolic of one purpose of CHRIST’S Coming; namely, to purge away iniquity from His Church and people. He came “suddenly to His Temple,” as had been foretold; and by the alarm He inspired, set forth in type the terrors of

<sup>m</sup> Jerome,—who seems to be recollecting what he had read in Origen.

<sup>n</sup> See St. John ii. 14, 15; and the notes there.

<sup>o</sup> Gen. xli. 32.

<sup>p</sup> See the note on St. Mark xi. 16.

that Second Advent to which the Church directs the eyes of her children, and concerning which the prophet had written,—“But who may abide the Day of His Coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?” . . . The Reader will find more on this great subject in the note on St. John ii. 15, to which he is referred.

St. Mark adds here, that CHRIST “would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the Temple<sup>r</sup>:”

and said unto them, It is written, My House shall be called the House of Prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Concerning these quotations from the ancient prophets<sup>s</sup>, the Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark xi. 16.

And the Blind and the Lame came to Him in the Temple; and He healed them.

Most significant, truly, is this exquisite record. These were indeed the days of MESSIAH, of which it had been written—“Then the eyes of the Blind shall be opened: then shall the Lame man leap as an hart<sup>t</sup>.” The eyes were opened ‘in the temple,’ (that is, in *the Church*,) ‘to see the way<sup>u</sup>;’ and there, also, were the feet made strong that they might *walk* therein. “Open Thou mine

<sup>s</sup> Malachi iii. 2.

<sup>r</sup> St. Mark xi. 16.

<sup>s</sup> Isaiah lvi. 7, and Jerem. vii. 11.

<sup>t</sup> Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

<sup>u</sup> Acts ix. 2 (see the margin): xix. 9, 23, &c.

eyes that I may see the wondrous things of Thy Law<sup>x</sup>." "Shew me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths<sup>y</sup>:" "cause me to know the way wherein I should walk<sup>z</sup>." "I will run the way of Thy Commandments when Thou hast set my heart at liberty<sup>a</sup>." . . . By such symbolic language did the Law anticipate the Gospel: and by such symbolic acts does the Gospel interpret the Law!

Consider how many acts of Divine Power are hinted at, not described, in this short verse.

- 15 And when the chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the Children crying in the Temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they  
16 were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest Thou what these say?

These Children, who had perhaps caught up the sound of the acclamations they had already heard<sup>b</sup>, "were regardless of the frown of the Pharisees: for their simplicity of heart gave them a courage which many weak believers, more advanced in age, had not; and inspired them to do what others would not have dared." Thus were little Children at first, His martyrs<sup>c</sup>; next, the pattern which He set before His Church<sup>d</sup>; and now, at last, they are heard singing His praises

<sup>x</sup> Ps. cxix. 18.

<sup>y</sup> Ps. xxv. 4.

<sup>z</sup> Ps. cxliii. 8.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. cxix. 32.

<sup>b</sup> See above, verse 9.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matth. ii. 16.

<sup>d</sup> First in St. Matth. xviii. 1 to 4. Next in St. Mark x. 13 to 16

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

Temple. "His own Priests are silent, or break silence to blaspheme His Name; but children cry 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' His own people He weeps, but with these He rejoices. Even the women, He bids to it for themselves;' but He encourages the children to rejoice<sup>f</sup>."

Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye read, Out of the mouth of babes and younglings Thou hast perfected praise?

suppose,' (says an ancient Writer,) 'that who praised, knew not what they praised; the SPIRIT, who suddenly inspired them, forth the words of Truth.' This seems indeed to have been the case. Consider St. Matthew . The quotation is from Psalm viii. 2; by which, our LORD seems to say, 'Be it so. My fault that these cry thus. But is it My fault, a thousand years ago, the Prophet foretold so it should be?' Take notice that in giving the attention of His enemies to that Psalm, the Holy One referred them to the most glorious declarations in Prophecy, His own entire dominion over all created beings in Heaven and Earth<sup>h</sup>.

And He left them, and went out of the Temple into Bethany; and He lodged there. Seeking, surely, to rest His Body where His

Williams.

<sup>g</sup> Pseudo Chrysostom.

<sup>h</sup> Consider Hebr. ii. 6 to 8.

- 2 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

This must be a weighty saying, for we have already met with it in St. Matthew's Gospel<sup>o</sup>; and, (with a slight difference,) in St. Luke's also<sup>p</sup>. When our LORD said 'this Mountain,' He may be supposed to have pointed to the Mount of Olives, along the side of which He was proceeding. It has been remarked that, from these verses, "we learn that Prayer, as well as Faith, was necessary even for the Apostles, in order to the full exercise of their miraculous powers. Consider St. Matthew xvii. 19 to 21<sup>q</sup>."

- 23 And when He was come into the Temple, the chief Priests and the Elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, By what authority doest Thou these things?  
 24 and who gave Thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority  
 25 I do these things. The Baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?

Some remarks on what precedes will be found in the notes on St. Mark xi. 28 and 30.

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From Heaven; He will

<sup>o</sup> St. Matth. xvii. 20.

<sup>p</sup> St. Luke xvii. 6.

<sup>q</sup> Archd. Hale and Bp. Lonsdale.

say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? but if we shall say, Of men; we fear 26 the people: for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We can- 27 not tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Take notice that they *could* tell, but *would* not. Our LORD puts His answer into the shape which theirs would have assumed, had they spoken the Truth.

He proceeds to deliver three parables in succession,—the first and third of which, are peculiar to the present Gospel. The two last are highly prophetic; but all three contain a solemn warning. It will be observed that the first is closed with a short question, to which it was impossible for the enemies of CHRIST to return the answer, 'We cannot tell.'

But what think ye? A *certain* Man had 28 two Sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my Vineyard.

We are evidently hearing of the same Father whose sons' conduct forms the subject of the parable related in St. Luke xv.<sup>r</sup> His 'Vineyard' we have also heard of before,—as in the preceding chapter<sup>s</sup>, and in St. Luke xiii. 6: and it receives conspicuous mention lower down, in verse 33. It

<sup>r</sup> See St. Luke xv. 11.

<sup>s</sup> St. Matth. xx. 1.

is here explained to mean 'the Kingdom of Heaven', as *that* Kingdom begins here on Earth.

"To 'work in the Vineyard' is to do Righteousness. To cultivate the whole thereof, no man is sufficient".

29 He answered and said, I will not: but  
30 afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir: and went not.

Observe the contrast between the very style of their answers. 'I will not,'—is not only undutiful but rude: 'I go, Sir,'—sounds not only dutiful, but even very respectful.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his Father? They say unto Him, The first.

It is reasonable to suppose that the present parable is fairly capable of a national and prophetic application. The Gentiles had refused at first to work in the Lord's Vineyard: but already they had repented, and were prepared to go. God's chosen people made abundant professions<sup>\*</sup>, but did no *work*. This however is certainly not the immediate purpose and tendency of our SAVIOUR's words.

These 'two Sons' stand for two different classes among the Jews. 'The Publicans and harlots'

<sup>\*</sup> See below, verse 31.

<sup>\*</sup> Consider Exodus xxiv. 3 and 7.

<sup>u</sup> Jerome.

<sup>v</sup> See below, ver. 31.

resent 'the first' Son: the Pharisees were cimens of 'the second.' The Publicans and lots by their wicked, dissolute lives, in reply to o's invitation that they would serve Him, had nly said that they 'would not.' The Pharisees, their fair professions, and lip-service<sup>2</sup>, had as nly declared their readiness to work. They e men, however, who 'said, and did not<sup>a</sup>.' erefore, as it follows,—

JESUS saith unto them, Verily I say unto 1, That the publicans and the harlots go o the Kingdom of God before you. For 32 an came unto you in the way of Righte- sness, and ye believed him not: but the blicans and the harlots believed him: and when ye had seen *it*, repented not after- rd, that ye might believe him.

Thus then, our LORD Himself in part explains s own parable: at least, He here informs us om He intended by the 'Two Sons.' But, (as ial,) His application of His own words is strange l unexpected. The Baptist's summons, the arisees obeyed *not*: but the Publicans and lots *did* obey it. Thus the Divine Speaker *verses* the characters He has been hitherto pour- ying: and instead of reproaching His assail- ts with their wickedness in saying 'We go, Sir,' d yet failing to go,—He bids them mark the ntrast which their characters and conduct had

<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah xxix. 13.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xxiii. 3.



respectively presented. The Publicans and harlots, when the Baptist invited them to walk in the way of Righteousness, had said 'We go, Sir,'—*and they had actually gone.* But the Pharisees, who, (like 'the first' son in the Parable,) had said 'We will not,' failed to imitate that son in his *repentance* likewise. Nay, though they 'had seen' the obedience of the others, they '*repented not afterward!*'

- 33 Hear another parable: There was a certain Householder, which planted a Vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

The owner of a Vineyard was careful to encircle his property with 'a hedge,' (which probably denotes a stone wall;) the object being not so much to prevent 'those that pass by the way' from 'plucking,' as to protect the fruit from the incursions of foxes<sup>b</sup>, and of wild boars<sup>c</sup>. The 'wine-press' was placed above the 'winefat<sup>d</sup>,'—which consisted of a pit dug in the earth and lined with masonry, or hewn out of the solid rock. The 'Tower' was for protection. He who dwelt there was expected to keep watch over the Vineyard.

Concerning the mystical interpretation of the present parable, the Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark xii. 1 to 8. God of course is

<sup>b</sup> Song of Solomon ii. 15.    <sup>c</sup> Ps. lxxx. 13.    <sup>d</sup> St. Mark xii. 1.

he Husbandman, and His Church is the Vine-ard, 'and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.'

And when the time of the fruit drew near, 34 he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the 35 husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

They beat one,—as Jeremiah<sup>e</sup>; and stoned another,—as Zechariah the son of Jehoiada<sup>f</sup>.

Again, he sent other servants more than 36 the first; and they did unto them likewise.

Very apposite is the language of the Old Testament itself to the transactions here related in the way of parable. "I sent unto you" (says the Great Householder), "all My Servants the Prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate<sup>g</sup>." "Nevertheless," (exclaims a righteous member of the same nation,) "they were disobedient and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy Law behind their backs, and slew Thy Prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee: and they wrought great provocations<sup>h</sup>."

But last of all he sent unto them his Son, 37 saying, They will reverence my Son.

This is said, not with reference to God's Foreknowledge, but to Man's Free-will. God declares

<sup>e</sup> Jer. xx. 1 to 6, &c.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

<sup>g</sup> Jer. xlv. 4.

<sup>h</sup> Neh. ix. 26,—quoted by Trench. See also Dan. ix. 6, 10, &c.

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

hereby what *ought* to be. Men *ought* to  
verenced His SON.

38 But when the husbandmen saw t  
they said among themselves, This  
Heir; come, let us kill him, and let  
39 on his inheritance. And they caught  
and cast *him* out of the Vineyard, a  
40 *him*. When the Lord therefore of th  
yard cometh, what will he do unt  
41 husbandmen? They say unto him,  
miserably destroy those wicked m  
will let out *his* Vineyard unto other h  
men, which shall render him the f  
42 their seasons. JESUS saith unto th  
ye never read in the Scriptures, Th  
which the builders rejected, the sam  
come the head of the corner: this  
LORD's doing, and it is marvellous  
eyes?

He asks them whether they had never  
Prophecy concerning MESSIAH in Psalm  
where He is spoken of as a Stone, whic  
jected indeed by the Builders, (even as  
of the Vineyard was rejected by the Husb  
but which became 'the Head of the corn  
His further reference to Isaiah, (in verse  
teaches them that utter destruction will  
consequence of their wicked conduct. §  
in the note on St. Mark xii. 11.

Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom 43  
'God shall be taken from you, and given  
a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

'In their Seasons,'—as those miserable men,  
tering a terrible prophecy against themselves,  
d truly spoken<sup>1</sup>. Namely, at Advent, Watch-  
ness and Prayer; at Epiphany, Faith: Humili-  
on and Repentance during Lent: Newness of  
fe at Easter: and all 'the Fruit of the SPIRIT'<sup>k</sup>  
Whitsuntide.

And whosoever shall fall on this Stone 44  
all be broken: but on whomsoever It shall  
ll, It will grind him to powder.

That is,—*He* shall experience sore injury to  
homsoever the Doctrine of CHRIST crucified  
oves 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of  
fence.' To reject Him, is to be broken. But  
ie man on whom CHRIST, after years of long-  
ffering patience, shall execute judgment, will  
e utterly destroyed thereby; will become 'like  
ie chaff of the summer threshing floors<sup>1</sup>.'

Our LORD's allusion in the first words of verse  
4, to what is written in Isaiah viii. 15, is unmis-  
akeable<sup>m</sup>. The latter part of the sentence recalls  
n ancient Greek proverb:—'The mill-stones of

<sup>1</sup> See above, ver. 41.

<sup>k</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.

<sup>l</sup> Dan. ii. 35.

<sup>m</sup> A remarkable portion of prophecy, truly; for, from Is. viii. 2 to 18, there are no less than five places quoted or referred to in distinct places of the New Testament, viz. 1 St. Pet. iii. 14, 15: Rom. ix. 33 and 1 St. Pet. ii. 8: Heb. ii. 13, (two quotations): and the present place.

Heaven grind the corn slowly ; but they grind it to very powder.'

45 And when the Chief Priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived  
46 that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a Prophet.

Accordingly, 'they left Him and went their way<sup>n</sup>:' but in what a temper and disposition of mind, the subsequent History best shews. They thirsted for His blood ; and gladly accepted the offer of Judas to betray Him into their hands '*in the absence of the multitude*'.

## The Prayer.

FROM all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion ; from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism ; from hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word and Commandment,

Good LORD, deliver us.

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark xii. 12.

<sup>o</sup> St. Luke xxii. 6.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*1 The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son. 9 The vocation of the Gentiles. 12 The punishment of him that wanted the wedding garment. 15 Tribute ought to be paid to Caesar. 23 CHRIST confuteth the Sadducees for the Resurrection: 34 answereth the Lawyer, which is the first and great commandment: 41 and poseth the Pharisees about the MESSIAS.*

The Parable of 'the Marriage of the King's Son,' which the present chapter commences, and which is peculiar to St. Matthew's Gospel, bears considerable resemblance to the parable of 'the great Supper,' which is related by St. Luke<sup>a</sup>. The two parables are however wholly distinct. The key-note to what follows is supplied by verse 43 of the former Chapter.

XXII. AND JESUS answered and spake <sup>1</sup> to them again by parables, and said, The <sup>2</sup> Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a Marriage for His Son; and sent forth His servants to call them <sup>3</sup> that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xiv. 16 to 24.

It is quite evident that God is the 'King,' here spoken of. The 'Marriage which He made for His SON,' can be none other than that espousal of the Church to CHRIST<sup>b</sup> which is discoursed of from the beginning of Genesis<sup>c</sup> to the end of Revelation<sup>d</sup>; and of which Marriage itself is but a type or symbol<sup>e</sup>. The Prophets, generally, will be the servants 'sent forth to call them that were bidden' (that is, the Jewish nation,) 'to the wedding.' Take notice, that they are sent 'to call *them that were called*:' the very form of the expression implying that the invitation had been made, all along, to the Jews: that they, from the beginning, had been '*called* to be saints'.

- 4 Again, He sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared My Dinner: My oxen and *My* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the Marriage.

The terms in which the invitation is conveyed remind us that a splendid Festival is spoken of; and one which lasted many days. This must be borne in mind, or the parable will be scarcely intelligible. Such festivals anciently attended great marriages; and the figure has this special fitness,

<sup>b</sup> See the note on St. John ii. 1.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. ii. 24, compared with 1 Cor. vi. 16, and Eph. v. 31.

<sup>d</sup> Rev. xxii. 17.

<sup>e</sup> As the Church twice asserts in her Marriage-Service.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. i. 7.

convivial notions were mixed up in the minds of the Jews with the coming of MESSIAH's Kingdom. Our LORD Himself will be found to have employed a kindred image when discoursing on the same subject<sup>b</sup>.

Then the Apostles were sent forth, and commanded to "preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand<sup>i</sup>,"—what did they say in effect

"I have prepared My Dinner; all things ready: come unto the Marriage?" *They*, in (and those sent by them,) are the 'other servants' here spoken of; for CHRIST had come into the World,—the great Victim had been slain<sup>k</sup>,—all was now ready! Whence, the difference between the terms of the message in verses 3 and 9. We may, however, if we please, consider St. John the Baptist, the Twelve, and the Seventy as the servants first sent; and all who have preached the Gospel since the sacrifice of the Death of CHRIST, as intended by the 'other servants.'

Either way, there is truth in the remark of a living Writer, that this Parable "extends beyond the other parables delivered on the same occasion, into deeper manifestations of God's wonderful Mercy. For, in the last parable, (that of 'the fig-tree,') He sent His Servants again and again

<sup>a</sup> Luke xiv. 15.

<sup>b</sup> See St. Matth. viii. 11 : St. Luke xxii. 30.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matth. x. 7.

<sup>d</sup> See the note on St. Luke xv. 23. And consider Isaiah xxv. 6, 'the mountain' being 'the mountain of the LORD's House.' See also Isaiah ii. 2, 3.



to be slain, and then His SON. But here, when His SON is killed also, He sends forth to say that His Dinner is prepared: that His choicest victims and fatlings are killed. Instead of destroying them for their wickedness, He calls them to a Feast (to feed on His SON whom they had killed!) but they refuse to come. Nor is this all; but the evil entreat and kill His servants also<sup>1</sup>." See more below, in the note on verse 8. It follows,—

- 5 But they made light of *it*, and went the ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise :

They do not make polite excuses, as in the Parable of 'the Great Supper,'—a parable distinct from this indeed, yet bearing so strong a resemblance to it<sup>m</sup>. That may be because the other parable was delivered at an earlier period of our LORD's Ministry, when the outward show at least of civil behaviour was maintained towards the Gospel message. Take notice that while St. Luke's parable is the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Trinity, the present parable is accordingly reserved till eighteen Sundays later.

- 6 and the remnant took His servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*.

If the terms in which the invitation was conveyed, (in verse 4,) as well as the manner in which it was received, (as related in verse 5,) recal t

<sup>1</sup> Williams.

<sup>m</sup> See St. Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20

parable of 'the Great Supper' in St. Luke's Gospel<sup>a</sup>, scarcely less forcibly is the parable of 'the vineyard let out to Husbandmen' brought to our remembrance by the verse which precedes and that which follows<sup>b</sup>. It may indeed seem an extraordinary way of shewing unwillingness to come to a Festival, thus to maltreat the servants who bring the invitation: yet does the very monstrousness of the course pursued but set forth the more fully "the monstrous fact, that men did so maltreat and slay the messengers of God's grace, the ambassadors of CHRIST, who came to them with glad tidings of good things<sup>c</sup>."

But when the King heard *thereof*, He was <sup>7</sup> wroth: and He sent forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their City.

The meaning is obvious. "By 'His armies' we understand the Romans under Vespasian and Titus, who, having slaughtered the inhabitants of Judæa, laid in ashes the faithless city<sup>d</sup>." By which interpretation, we do not, of course, exclude those legions of angels<sup>e</sup> which 'the LORD of Hosts' has ever at command, and which effectually do His bidding.—This then is a remarkable example of prophecy contained in Parable.

Then saith He to His servants, The Wed- <sup>8</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See St. Luke xiv. 17, 18, 19.

<sup>b</sup> See St. Matth. xxi. 35 and 41.

<sup>c</sup> Trench.

<sup>d</sup> Jerome. See St. Mattn. xxiv. 2: St. Luke xxi. 6, and the notes there.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 53.

ding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

Notice the continued prophetic character of the present Parable ; and the further development it contains of the Divine Mercy, which was noticed above in the last note on verse 4.

The declaration of Paul and Barnabas, addressing the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia, is here brought to mind :—"It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves *unworthy* of everlasting Life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles : for so hath the LORD commanded us<sup>a</sup>."

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as  
10 many as ye shall find, bid to the Marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the Wedding was furnished with guests.

"Be it known . . . that the Salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *they will hear it*."

Take notice that the guests which were 'gathered,' are said to have been 'as many as they found ; *both bad and good.*' This brings to mind some remarks which were offered in the note on St. Matthew xiii. 26, concerning the mixed aspect which the Church now presents. It prepares the mind also for the incident which follows ; and

<sup>a</sup> Acts xiii. 46, 47.

<sup>v</sup> Acts xxviii. 28.

which forms, in fact, *the second part* of the Parable. We have heard till now of the Rejection of the Feast. It remains that we hear the fate of the Unworthy Guest.

And when the King came in to see the 11 guests, He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and He saith unto 12 him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?

"He calls him 'Friend,' because He had invited him to the wedding; but He charges him with want of manners in polluting by his filthy dress the elegance of the wedding entertainment."

The King of Kings comes in to examine His guests, (that is, 'those who sit at His Table'), at all times; but it may be thought that he comes in a special manner on certain great occasions,—as on Festival Days, during Sacred Seasons, and at the Services of the Sanctuary generally. Our Church accordingly in one of her Exhortations to Holy Communion, requires her Children 'so to search and examine their own consciences that they may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, *in the marriage-garment required by GOD in Holy Scripture.*' And indeed the reference to the Holy Eucharist is so obvious, that we almost

▪ See the heading of the Chapter. The parable of 'the Prodigal Son' consists, in like manner, of two parts. See the note on St. Luke xv. 25.

▼ Jerome. Consider Zephaniah i. 7, 8.

*assume* it, in reading the Parable.—Take notice that only *one* person, out of the entire assemblage, is supposed unworthy,—perhaps in order to bring the matter treated of, at once home to the breast of every man. ‘*LORD, is it I?*’ Judas asked the question afterwards. May it not have been the special intention of His merciful LORD that the Traitor should have asked the question *now*?

We need not dispute concerning the meaning of the ‘wedding-garment:’ attempting to decide whether it be Charity<sup>w</sup>, or Humility<sup>x</sup>, or any other Christian grace in particular. It is an expression the propriety of which all must feel. CHRIST says by Revelation to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea, “I counsel thee *to buy of Me . . . white raiment*, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” And the Elder, in reply to his own inquiry, “what are these which are arrayed in white robes?”, makes answer,—“These are they which . . . have washed their robes, and made them white *in the blood of the LAMB*.” To “*put on CHRIST*,” ‘to be found in Him, not having our own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of CHRIST, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith<sup>b</sup>;’—such expressions seem pur-

<sup>w</sup> Col. iii. 12.

<sup>x</sup> 1 St. Pet. v. 5.

<sup>y</sup> Rev. iii. 18.

<sup>z</sup> Rev. vii. 13, 14. Consider, further, iii. 4, 5: iv. 4; vi. 11: vii. 9, &c.

<sup>a</sup> Gal. iii. 27. See Rom. xiii. 14, Eph. iv. 24, Col. iii. 10.

<sup>b</sup> Phil. iii. 9.

ely set on record in order to make the general ching of the text unmistakeable.

But, besides its reference to this World, there is evident allusion in this part of the Parable to Final Judgment; and it may be thought that at follows particularly favours such an interpretation. Notice first, the effect which CHRIST's action has on the offender :

and he was speechless.

The Sinner, arraigned before the Bar of God, finds himself without excuse. He is struck dumb, and by his very silence, condemns himself. The angels<sup>c</sup> are straightway called upon to execute the sentence of the Righteous Judge :

Then said the King to the servants, Bind <sup>13</sup> in hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

With 'hand,' 'foot,' and 'eye,' men chiefly understand<sup>d</sup>: wherefore the sinner is not only bound in hand and foot,' but consigned to 'darkness' also. The Reader will find the rest of the verse discussed readily in the notes on St. Matthew viii. 11, 12.

For many are called, but few *are* chosen. <sup>14</sup>  
This saying has come before us already; namely,

Consider St. Matth. xiii. 41, 49.

Consider St. Mark ix. 43, 45, 46: and see the note on the text. "If *my* *step* hath turned out of the way," (says righteous,) "and mine heart walked after *mine* eyes, and if any blot hath been added to *mine* hands." Job xxxi. 7.

at the close of the parable of 'the Labourers in the Vineyard:' but the remark which it elicited on that occasion is not altogether applicable to it here\*. We may observe however that, in both places, it seems to apply only in a broad and general way to what goes before.

- 15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in *His* talk.  
 16 And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the Way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any *man*: for Thou regardest not the person of  
 17 men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?

The Pharisees and the Herodians, then, conspire for this accursed purpose. It is worth observing that these sects held opposite tenets in respect of the particular question which they here bring before our Lord. The Pharisees held the very calling of a Publican in abhorrence; calling by the name of *Sinners*<sup>f</sup> as many as farmed the revenue. Very hateful, therefore, in their eyes was the payment of tribute to Cæsar. Not so the Herodians; concerning whom, we know little indeed; except that they were adherents of Herod<sup>g</sup> and, as such, must have been mainly concerned t

\* See the note on St. Matth. xx. 16.

<sup>f</sup> St. Luke xix. 7. And see St. Mark ii. 15.

<sup>g</sup> See the note on St. Mark iii. 6.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including the names of the authors and the titles of the works. This list is organized in a table with two columns: the first column contains the names of the authors, and the second column contains the titles of the works. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the titles are listed in the order in which they appear in the document.





RENDER THEREFORE UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CÆSAR'S.

*St. Matthew xxii. 21.*

hold the Roman dominion in Judæa, to which the family of Herod, alien by descent, was indebted for the maintenance of its power and authority. That these two opposite sects should have united on this occasion, as both St. Matthew and St. Mark<sup>b</sup> relate, need produce no surprise. The Gospel supplies other examples of the same thing<sup>1</sup>. Our LORD's triumphant entry into Jerusalem a few days before, as the Son of David, and His daily disorders, had exasperated and alarmed them both; and led them eagerly to seek that destruction, which they soon after succeeded in accomplishing. And it was expedient for their hateful object, that persons who took opposite sides on this particular question should appear to be concerned in promoting it: for the intention was, either way, to turn the answer to our LORD's prejudice<sup>1</sup>." See the note on St. Luke xx. 22.

But JESUS perceived their wickedness, 18 and said, Why tempt ye Me, *ye* hypocrites? Hew Me the tribute money. And they 19 brought unto Him a penny. And He saith 20 to them, Whose *is* this image and super-  
scription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. 21 Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard *these words*, they 22

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark xii. 13.

See the note on St. Matth. xvi. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. W. H. Mill.

marvelled, and left Him, and went their way.

Several remarks will be found on this entire incident in the Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel.<sup>k</sup> Our LORD's next assailants are the unbelieving Sadducees ; who are found to experience far gentler treatment than their rivals at His hands.

23 The same day came to Him the Sadducees, which say that there is no Resurrec-  
 24 tion, and asked Him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up  
 25 seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren : and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having  
 26 no issue, left his wife unto his brother : likewise the second also, and the third, unto the  
 27 seventh. And last of all the woman died  
 28 also. Therefore in the Resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven ? for they all had her.

29 JESUS answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

For *to quote* the Scriptures is not *to know* them.

30 For in the Resurrection they neither

<sup>k</sup> St. Luke xx. 20 to 25.

marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the Angels of God in Heaven. But as 31 touching the Resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, 32 and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

And when the multitude heard *this*, they 33 were astonished at His Doctrine.

This highly instructive incident will be found discussed at considerable length in the notes on St. Mark's Gospel<sup>1</sup>: the Reader is therefore requested to refer to that portion of the Commentary. It may be useful to point out that this is *the only* place in the Gospel where the Sadducees are related to have addressed a question to our LORD: though they are elsewhere found to have demanded of Him 'a sign from Heaven<sup>m</sup>.' After the Resurrection, however, the Sadducees are found to have been the principal enemies of the Religion of CHRIST<sup>n</sup>.

With reference to the Discourse which precedes, a pious Writer says—"And now, having kindled in us the desire of Eternal and Angelic Life, our LORD proceeds to point out the way to attain it,—by Love. Thus the contentions of men serve to bring forth the truths of the Kingdom; and

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on St. Mark xii. 18 to 27.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 1.

<sup>n</sup> See Acts iv. 1: v. 17, 24, &c.

from out these discordant elements does our Lord mould the harmonious perfections of His New Temple 'not made with hands.' "

34 But when the Pharisees had heard that  
He had put the Sadducees to silence, they  
35 were gathered together. Then one of them  
*which was* a Lawyer, asked *Him a question*  
36 tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is  
37 the great commandment in the Law? JESUS  
said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy  
God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,  
38 and with all thy mind. This is the first and  
39 great commandment. And the second is like  
unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as  
thyself.

"Seems it not rather a *contrary* commandment? Whereas in the former, the whole stream of Love is directed in one undivided current towards God, this second commandment seems to cut out a new channel for it, and to turn a great part of it to men; 'thy neighbour as thyself.' No, they are not contrary, if we take them right: yea, they do not only agree, but are inseparable. They do not divide our love, but they set it in its right courses: first, wholly to God, as the sovereign good; and then, back from Him, according to His own Will, it is derived downwards to our neighbour. For then only do we love both ourselves and others

• Williams.

light, when we make our love to Him the reason and the rule of both. So then, our love is not to be divided betwixt Him and our Neighbour, or any creature: but is first to be bestowed on Him; and then He diffuses, by way of reflection, so much upon others as He thinks fit. Being all in His hands, it is at His disposal; and that which He disposes elsewhere, (as here 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,') it is not taken off from Him, but abiding still in Him, as in its natural place, flows forth from Him as beams flow forth from the sun and enlighten the air; and yet are not cut off from it.

"So then, the second is like unto the first, because it springs from it, and depends upon it. It commands the same affection: love, in the former, placed on God,—and in this, extended from Him to our Neighbour. And it is like unto it in this, too: that, as the former is the sum of the first Table, and so the first and great Commandment; so, this is the sum of the second Table, and therefore next unto it in greatness and importance<sup>p</sup>."

On these two commandments hang all the 40 Law and the Prophets.

"From these two Commandments are derived all the particulars of duty to God and Man, taught in the Law of Moses, and by the Prophets who have enforced that Law<sup>q</sup>."

The Reader will find several remarks on this question of the Lawyer or Scribe, who belonged

<sup>p</sup> *Abp. Leighton.*

<sup>q</sup> Archd. Hale and Bp. Lonsdale.

to the sect of the Pharisees, in the Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel; to which he is referred<sup>t</sup>.

41 While the Pharisees were gathered toge-  
 42 ther, JESUS asked them, saying, What think  
 ye of CHRIST? whose Son is He? They say  
 43 unto Him, *The Son* of David. He saith unto  
 them, How then doth David in spirit call  
 44 Him LORD; saying, The LORD said unto my  
 LORD, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I  
 45 make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David  
 then call Him LORD, how is He his Son?  
 46 And no man was able to answer Him a  
 word: neither durst any *man* from that day  
 forth ask Him any more *questions*.

"From whence it is evident," (remarks Bishop Pearson,) "that the Jews of old, even the Pharisees, the most accurate and skilful amongst them, did interpret this Psalm<sup>s</sup> of the MESSIAS: for if they had conceived the Prophecy belonged either to Abraham, or David, or any other, they doubtless would have answered our SAVIOUR that this belonged not to the Son of David."

The concluding portion of the present chapter, which occurs in all the three Gospels, will be found fully commented on in the notes on St. Luke's Gospel; whither the Reader is referred<sup>t</sup>.

<sup>s</sup> See the notes on St. Mark xii. 28 to 34.

<sup>s</sup> Ps. cx. 1.

<sup>t</sup> See the note on St. Luke xx. 40 to 44.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

1 CHRIST admonisheth the people to follow the good doctrine, not the evil examples, of the Scribes and Pharisees. 5 His Disciples must beware of their ambition. 13 He denounceth eight woes against their hypocrisy and blindness: 34 and prophesieth of the destruction of Jerusalem.

To read the Discourse contained in the ensuing chapter with profit, the circumstances under which was delivered should be borne in mind. In the chapters which immediately precede, we have seen our LORD refuting His assailants,—Chief Priests and Elders, Pharisees and Herodians, Sadducees and Scribes. At last, He silenced them with a hard question. “No man was able to answer Him a word; neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions<sup>a</sup>.” But “the common people heard Him gladly<sup>b</sup>.”

At such a juncture,—speaking in the audience of the Pharisees, His own Disciples, and the multitude,—we feel that nothing of ordinary interest could have proceeded from the lips of the Divine speaker. It was the closing scene of His public ministry. He was ready to be sacrificed in three years. He had borne with the contradiction of sinners

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xxii. 46.<sup>b</sup> St. Mark xii. 37.



long enough ; and was no longer obliged, as heretofore, to consult for His own personal safety. He was about to be withdrawn from the eyes of that multitude also, which had hitherto hung delighted on His words<sup>c</sup> ; and which may well have desired to be informed by Him how they were henceforth to think of their Teachers, and of Him. Verily, He did not keep them long in suspense, or send them away, finally, in doubt ! Hear Him ; and consider how ‘the Scribes and Pharisees’ must have quailed beneath the withering denunciations which follow, and which their own monstrous wickedness had drawn down upon their heads ! Is it possible, however, to read the present chapter, and not to feel that its warnings (like so many in the Gospel,) are addressed to the Church of CHRIST for ever ; and specially to *the Teachers* of Religion, —the successors of those who ‘sat in Moses’ seat’?

XXIII. THEN spake JESUS to the multitude and to His Disciples, saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat : all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do ;

To ‘sit in Moses’ seat,’ is to expound with authority the Law of Moses. By these words, our SAVIOUR eternally exhorts and rebukes as many as make the unworthiness of their Teacher a pretext for their own neglect : “in the greatness of His wisdom and foresight requiring His Church

<sup>c</sup> See the note on St. Luke xix. 48.

look to the seat of authority, whatever may be the character of those who occupy it<sup>d</sup>."

But when it is considered on whose lips those words are found, as well as to whom they were addressed, they will be perceived to contain besides, a striking intimation of the entire agreement which subsists between the Law and the Gospel. On another occasion, our SAVIOUR declared that He had 'not come to destroy' the Law, but to fulfil<sup>e</sup> it; and accordingly, He is here found to enjoin upon His Disciples obedience to whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees bade them observe. This must have been because coming from one and the same Divine Author, the spiritual intent of the Law and the Gospel was the same, though the letter was so different. Consider Rom. ii. 28, 29.

It do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

"What can be more pitiable," (asks an old writer<sup>f</sup>), "than a Teacher, to imitate whom is vain,—to refuse to follow whom, is salvation?"... Our SAVIOUR proceeds to explain what He means when He says of the Scribes and Pharisees that they say, and do not.'

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

<sup>d</sup> Williams.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matth. v. 17, 18.

<sup>f</sup> Origen.

That is, "they exact without any allowance the utmost rigour of Life from those that are put under them, while they allow themselves unbounded license: the very reverse of which, should be the practice of the good Ruler,—namely, to be to himself a severe judge, to others a merciful one<sup>s</sup>." To 'bind burdens,' is to gather traditions from every side; whereby to burden the conscience, and to make the 'yoke' of the Law<sup>h</sup> unbearable. See the note on St. Luke xi. 46, where these words are found repeated: and consider the contrast between what these men taught, and the 'easy yoke' and 'light burden' of our SAVIOUR CHRIST<sup>i</sup>.

- 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men:

This is the sinful temper against which our LORD especially warns us in that part of His Sermon on the Mount, where He gives directions concerning Almsgiving, Fasting, and Prayer. Not that the desire of human praise is sinful in itself: but it is a grievous Sin, when human applause is made the end and object of actions which are professedly done to the honour of God. Consider St. Matthew vi. 1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 18, and the notes thereon.

they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

'Phylactery' is a Greek word,—denoting 'a

<sup>s</sup> Chrysostom.

<sup>h</sup> Acts xv. 10.

<sup>i</sup> St. Matth. xi. 30.

<sup>j</sup> For consider St. Luke xiv. 9, 10, 29, and the notes there.

preservative:' shewing that those two parchment labels which the Jews wore, one on their wrist, the other on their forehead, in obedience to the strict letter of God's command<sup>k</sup>, and inscribed with a sentence of the Law,—were regarded in the light of amulets, charms, or spells. The Pharisees,—wholly overlooking the spiritual intention of the precept referred to, and which obviously was that God's Law should be the rule of every action, the subject of meditation, day and night<sup>l</sup>,—made their phylacteries unusually broad and visible, in order to win for themselves a higher reputation for piety with the people.

*That* command of the Law will further be remembered, by which it was ordained that the children of Israel should "make them fringes in the borders of their garments, . . . and put upon the fringe of the borders, a ribband of blue:" the intention being that they might "look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them<sup>m</sup>." Such a 'fringe' and 'ribband of blue' we have already had occasion to notice as worn on the outer garment of the SAVIOUR<sup>n</sup>. It was not *the wearing* of this, therefore, which our LORD condemned; but *the enlargement* of it, by which the Pharisees assumed the outward badge of ex-

<sup>k</sup> See Deut. vi. 8: xi. 18. Also, Exod. xiii. 9, 16.

<sup>l</sup> Josh. i. 8, &c.—Consider this in connection with the *Eye* and the *Hand* to be so carefully guarded,—the one as the chief avenue, the other, as the chief instrument of sin: St. Matth. v. 29 and 30.

<sup>m</sup> Numbers xv. 38, 39. Deut. xxii. 12.

<sup>n</sup> See the note on St. Matth. ix. 20.

traordinary piety and of uncommon obedience to the Divine Commandment. Nor, — when it is discovered that both St. Mark and St. Luke concur in this place in preserving those additional words of reproach, '*who love to walk about in robes*,' — is it possible to avoid suspecting that besides their gross hypocrisy, these miserable men practised a contemptible foppery in respect of their vestments, also. It is certain that our LORD is here speaking of the appetite for human praise and admiration; for He adds:

6 and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and  
7 the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

To repeat the title *twice*, was a mark of especial respect<sup>p</sup>. The disposition which delights in this description of praise, our SAVIOUR elsewhere denounces as inimical to the spirit of Faith. "How can ye believe," (He asks,) "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only<sup>q</sup>?"

The ambition of the Pharisees to occupy 'the uppermost rooms at Feasts,' (that is, the places of highest honour at an Entertainment,) must have been notorious and prevalent; for when our Blessed LORD on a certain occasion 'went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark xii. 38, St. Luke xx. 46.

<sup>p</sup> See St. Matth. vii. 21, 22; xxv. 11; St. Mark xiv. 45.

<sup>q</sup> St. John v. 44.

'Sabbath Day,' we find that 'He put forth  
able to those which were bidden, *when He  
and how they chose out the chief places*.' The  
f seats in the Synagogues' are alluded to  
. James in his Epistle\*.

it be not ye called Rabbi: for one is 8  
Master, *even* CHRIST; and all ye are  
ren.

r LORD here delivers a caution against the  
sin which St. Paul condemns in those who  
I am of Paul; and I, of Apollos' . . . The  
rendered 'Master,' properly means 'Teacher.'  
he course forbidden is that which St. Paul  
as to in his second Epistle to Timothy"; and  
St. James forbids in the beginning of his  
Chapter,—“My Brethren, be not many Mas-  
' that is, “Teachers.” The Jews were divided  
nly into two great sects, but also into oppo-  
schools, and contending parties,—their lead-  
Rabbis erecting themselves into 'Leaders,'  
putting forth their own private opinions with  
arity, as doctrines to be received by their fol-  
s, and Disciples. It is *this* to which our  
here refers, and which He condemns.

it but what St. Paul often calls himself a  
cher\*, and on many occasions makes allusion  
e title or office: but then he uses the term in  
y different sense from that referred to by our  
. He calls himself and others, 'Teachers,'

. Luke xiv. 1 and 7.    \* St. James ii. 2, 3.    † 1 Cor. i. 12.  
Tim. iv. 3.            \* 1 Tim. ii. 7.    2 Tim. i. 11, &c.

only because they taught *the Religion of CHRIST*,—not as the founders of new sects, or the advocates of sectarian opinions. Thus because all are pupils in the one school of CHRIST, all, perforce, are ‘Brethren.’

- 9 And call no *man* your Father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in Heaven.

‘Father’ is a title of the same class as ‘Teacher,’ and in that particular sense in which the Jews applied it to their principal Doctors, and Founders of Schools, our SAVIOUR forbids its use among Christians. But that there is a sense in which it may be fitly used by ourselves,—St. Paul has shewn<sup>7</sup>. As a loftier appellation than Teacher, the Eternal SON assigns it to the Eternal FATHER.

Take notice in how many other places our SAVIOUR, by implication, repeats the assurance which is contained in the last few words. See St. Matthew v. 16, 45, 48 : vi. 1, 9 : vii. 11. St. Mark xi. 25, 26, &c.

If any sectaries do reject the use of distinctive titles in addressing their fellow-men, on the plea that CHRIST Himself hath forbidden the practice, let them be consistent, and call no man on Earth *their Father*, either. Rather, let them learn from the last-named injunction to interpret the others according to their spirit, and not according to their letter ; and so, to interpret them rightly.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 15.

Neither be ye called masters : for one is 10  
ur Master, *even* CHRIST.

Rather,—‘ *Leaders,*’ (or ‘ *Guides :*’) ‘ for one is  
ur *Leader,*’ (or ‘ *Guide.*’) See above, on verse  
and below, on verse 16.

But he that is greatest among you shall 11  
your servant. And whosoever shall exalt 12  
nself shall be abased : and he that shall  
mble himself shall be exalted.

The injunction in verse 11, is found also in St.  
Matthew xx. 26, 27,—where see the notes. Verse  
contains a famous saying, which has already  
en discussed in the Commentary on the latter  
ct of St. Luke xviii. 14 : and take notice that it  
either to that place, or to the present, which St.  
ter alludes in his First Epistle<sup>2</sup>. “ What indeed  
: all these sayings, but comments on that one,  
earn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart<sup>a</sup> ?”  
hat are they but modes of access to CHRIST?  
nd why is it the universal Law, ‘ that he that  
mbleth himself shall be exalted,’ but because  
; ‘ being in the form of God, . . . took upon  
m the form of a servant, and was made in the  
eness of man, and humbled Himself unto  
ath : wherefore God hath exalted Him, and  
ren Him a Name which is above every name ?’  
. Even so will He, according to this Law, exalt  
ery one in CHRIST, who after the same example

<sup>2</sup> 1 St. Pet. v. 6.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xi. 29.



humbles himself.” So far generally: but take notice that the special warning contained in verse 11, is addressed to persons in the Ministry. Our Divine Master here requires those who are set highest in the Church, to consider themselves as burdened with the heaviest stewardship. Thus titles of honour become transformed into notes of ministerial responsibility.

“Our LORD now turns to address the Pharisees themselves in words of awful judgment, which seem to anticipate the dreadful voice of His final sentence:” ‘denouncing eight <sup>b</sup> Woes’ in succession ‘against their hypocrisy and blindness,’ — (as it is remarked in the heading of the Chapter;) corresponding with the Eight Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. And thus, “His Ministry, which commenced with Beatitudes, ends with Woes; like too many passages of Human Life, which go forth in promise and terminate in self-reproach <sup>c</sup>.” Take notice that St. Matthew alone of the Evangelists records either the Blessings or the Curses: the former of which were delivered to ‘the lost sheep of the House of Israel <sup>d</sup>,’ ‘the poor in spirit,’ on a Mountain in Galilee;—the latter, on ‘the Mountain of the LORD <sup>e</sup>,’ and in the Temple, to the proud Professors of the Jewish Religion, and its ‘most straitest sect <sup>f</sup>.’ How are we thus reminded of the many singular and un-

<sup>b</sup> See verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29.

<sup>c</sup> Williams.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matth. x. 6, &c.

<sup>e</sup> Is. ii. 3.

<sup>f</sup> Acts xxvi. 5.

## II.] ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

ected ways in which the Law finds its counter-  
in the Gospel!

he Holy One had been hitherto addressing  
multitude and His Disciples.' He proceeds:

But Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, 13  
ocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of  
aven against men: for ye neither go in  
*rselves*, neither suffer ye them that are  
ering to go in.

Our SAVIOUR here speaks of them as having the  
ans of opening and shutting; whether it be  
Key of Knowledge<sup>b</sup> of which He chiefly  
aks, or 'the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>i</sup>.'  
words may therefore be understood in many  
s. To the Scribes appertained the interpreta-  
of the Law; but by their vain glosses and  
ely human Traditions, these 'blind guides'  
partially taught, or had wrongly explained,  
so, had in effect actually closed the Divine  
cles<sup>j</sup>; for their wickedness in which respect,  
*who gave the Law* proceeds now to reproach  
n in the severest manner<sup>k</sup>. This does not seem  
ry obvious interpretation of the place: but he  
compares what our LORD here says, with what  
ecorded of Him in St. Luke xi. 52, will proba-  
think that it must be the very thing which  
LORD intended. Then, further, the Govern-

Consider Deut. xxvii. 11 to 26.

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke xi. 52.

St. Matth. xvi. 19.

<sup>j</sup> See on St. Mark vii. 5.

See below, ver. 16 to 22. See also St. Matth. xv. 3 to 9, &c.

ment of the Church rested with the Scribes and Pharisees: but, as we have already seen, they availed themselves of their authority to 'bind heavy burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders.' To them was committed the power of excluding or restoring to visible Church-membership; but, (as in the case of the parents of the man born blind), they shamefully abused their power<sup>m</sup>. "I am the Door," (declares our Blessed LORD;) "by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved<sup>n</sup>:" but these wicked men, while they ascribed His miracles to Beelzebub<sup>o</sup>, denied His Teaching<sup>p</sup>, and rejected Him themselves,—“agreed, that if any man did confess that He was CHRIST, he should be put out of the Synagogue<sup>q</sup>:" the terror of which sentence deterred many members of the Sanhedrin from openly professing their belief in the SAVIOUR<sup>t</sup>. Nor did their wickedness in this respect cease with our LORD's Death<sup>r</sup>.—"No man can stand or fall alone," (says an excellent writer;) "much less a Minister of Religion. As no man can go to Heaven, but by his good example he will lead others there; so he, who by his evil life enters not in, shuts out others also<sup>s</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> See above ver. 4.

<sup>m</sup> St. John ix. 34,—where see the margin. Compare St. John vii. 13, xvi. 2, and xix. 38.

<sup>n</sup> St. John x. 9.

<sup>o</sup> St. Matth. ix. 34: xii. 24, &c.

<sup>p</sup> St. John ix. 16, &c. &c.

<sup>q</sup> St. John ix. 22.

<sup>r</sup> St. John xii. 42.

<sup>s</sup> For consider 1 Thess. ii. 16, and the places in the margin.

<sup>t</sup> Williams.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, 14 hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Our LORD charges these hypocrites with 'making long prayer as a pretext' for their avarice, (or, as St. Paul expresses it, a 'cloak of covetousness'\*) and points out that the peculiar circumstances which rendered their villainy so monstrous in His sight, was, that they plundered *the Widow*, whom He had recommended for ever to the protection of His Church. Take notice that of the whole of this prolonged invective, filling an entire chapter in St. Matthew's Gospel, verses 6 and 14 are *the only portions* of which St. Mark and St. Luke were guided to preserve the record also.

"Pretenders to Holiness," (says an ancient writer,) "practise most upon women, who are less apt than men to see through their hypocrisy ; and are easily inclined to love them on the ground of Religion†." But consider how God reveals Himself throughout Scripture as the God of *the Widow*‡ : singling her out as the very type of weakness, on more than one occasion §.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, 15

\* 1 Thess. ii. 5.

† Pseudo-Chrysostom. Consider 2 Tim. iii. 6.

‡ As in Deut. x. 18 : xiv. 29 : xxvii. 19. Ps. lxxviii. 5 : cxlvi. 9. Is. i. 17. Jer. vii. 6 : xxii. 3. Ezek. xxii. 7. Zech. vii. 10. Mal. iii. 5. &c. &c.

§ 1 Kings xvii. 9 : and see the note on St. Luke xviii. 3.

hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of Hell than yourselves.

The same sins which were condemned in the former verse, are the subject of this. It was no zeal for God's honour, no love of souls, which induced the Pharisees to take unwearied pains, or, (as our Lord proverbially expresses it,) to 'traverse sea and land to make one convert' to the Jewish Faith; but covetousness, — the sin of Judas: avarice,—disguised, as before, under the mask of Religion<sup>y</sup>.

How fearful must have been the system on, which so terrible a sentence could be passed by Him who is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life' itself!

- 16 Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by  
17 the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

The Pharisees, in their vain-glorious pride, assumed to themselves the title of 'Guides of the blind,'—as will be found pointed out in the note on St. John iii. 10. Our Lord therefore repeatedly reproaches them with *their own* blindness.

<sup>y</sup> See St. Luke xvi. 14.

"They be blind leaders of the blind," He says<sup>a</sup>: and again, below, in ver. 24, "Ye blind guides!"

'Blind' indeed, and worse than blind: "for" (says a learned Latin Father,) "when, in any dispute, or quarrel, or ambiguous cause, one swore by the Temple, and was afterwards convicted of falsehood, he was not held guilty. *That* is what is meant by 'Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing:'—that is, he owes nothing. But if he had sworn by the gold of the Temple, he was immediately compelled to pay down that by which he had sworn<sup>a</sup>." By which words, take notice that not the gold which overspread the building<sup>b</sup>, is meant; but the gold in the Treasury, which was called *Corban*<sup>c</sup>. For the Jews held that if any one swore thus,—'By the Temple,' (or 'By the Altar,') 'my goods shall not be yours,'—it was lawful for him, if he pleased, afterwards to alter his mind: but if he swore thus,—'Corban, my gold is for the Temple;' or, 'Corban, my cattle are for the Altar,'—this was a vow which he might by no means neglect to perform. Thus, it will be perceived that the same wickedness, in part, is here alluded to which was formally denounced by the LORD of Heaven and Earth in St. Matthew xv. 5, 6, and more clearly in St. Mark vii. 11 to 13,—where the Reader is requested to see the notes.

And, Whosoever shall swear by the Altar, 18

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xv. 14.

<sup>a</sup> Jerome.

<sup>b</sup> Concerning the gold of the *first* Temple, see 1 Kings vi. 21, 22.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matth. xxvii. 6, in the original.

it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Or rather, 'he is a debtor,'—as in verse 16.

- 19 Ye fools and blind; for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the Altar that sanctifieth the gift?

The Temple therefore *does* sanctify the gold; the Altar *does* sanctify the gift: as it is written in the Law,—“Whatsoever toucheth the Altar shall be holy<sup>d</sup>.” Let this be remembered in connexion with the furniture of Churches. Consider Numbers xvi. 37 to 39<sup>e</sup>.

'Fools and blind,' indeed! and as such, our LORD condescends to reason the point with them in verses 17, 19, and the three following. But it was *wilful* blindness. They had put out the candle of the LORD within them<sup>f</sup>. And observe, that the motive of their wickedness was apparent; for 'the gold' and 'the gift' enriched *themselves*.

- 20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the Altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.  
21 And whoso shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein.  
22 And he that shall swear by Heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon.

<sup>d</sup> Exod. xxix. 37.

<sup>e</sup> See also Leviticus xxvii. 28. Joshua vi. 19, in connexion with vii. 15 to 26.

<sup>f</sup> Consider St. Luke xi. 34 to 36.

For, as the less is contained in the greater, so, in the oath which is sworn by the Temple and the Altar, is contained the oath by the gold and the gift. Moreover, since no inanimate thing can be supposed to be the witness of an oath, he who swears by the Altar, by the Temple, or by Heaven itself, must be understood to swear by Him to whom all these belong. And thus, on quite another ground, our SAVIOUR convicts the Pharisees of blindness.

Wherefore, it is said in another place, "*Swear not at all*: neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the Earth, for it is His footstools."

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, 23 hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

That is, 'To do *justly*, and to love *mercy*, and to *walk humbly with thy GOD*<sup>h</sup>,' is what the LORD chiefly requires of thee; (to which words of the prophet Micah, our LORD surely refers in this place!): and yet thou art not at liberty to omit exactness in the most trifling matter of tithes, either: whether to be paid by thyself<sup>i</sup>, or to be received of others<sup>k</sup>.

<sup>h</sup> St. Matth. v. 34 to 37, and the notes thereon.

<sup>i</sup> Micah vi. 8.      <sup>j</sup> See St. Luke xviii. 12, and the note there.

<sup>k</sup> As the same word is translated in St. Luke xi. 42.



But take note, that the tithing of 'mint, anise, and cummin' took place in pursuance of no precept of the Law of God. It was an addition made by the Scribes: and yet we find that it here obtains the sanction of CHRIST Himself; for He tells the men of His day,—‘Ye ought not to leave it undone.’ So that this is one of the many instances to be found in the Gospels where our LORD teaches men to conform to Ecclesiastical rules, — even though no express warrant for them is to be found in the Bible. He here illustrates the saying with which He began His Discourse:—‘The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do!’

- 24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Rather, ‘Which strain *out* :’ a proverbial saying, which seems to refer to the practice of those who in the preparation of their drink are careful first to strain it; and which has an obvious application to as many as, being highly scrupulous in regard to trifles, are yet found to allow themselves freely in monstrous crimes. The Camel is selected in this and another sacred proverb<sup>m</sup> as the very emblem, to an Eastern eye, of what is huge, cumbersome, and unwieldy.

The ‘Woe’ which follows is only another ex-

<sup>l</sup> See above, verses 2, 3.

<sup>m</sup> See St. Matth. xix. 24, and the note there.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

f the Hypocrisy denounced in ver. 23. The  
as were over-scrupulous in 'the washing of  
l cups:' but the precept 'Wash *you*, make  
n,' they quite neglected: as it follows,—

: unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, 25  
ites! for ye make clean the outside  
cup and of the platter, but within  
e full of extortion and excess.

cup' is for drink, and 'the platter' for  
reference is therefore here made to daily  
nd it is declared that the Pharisees fur-  
forth their tables by extortion and un-  
sness. Woe to them for their sin! and  
the hypocrisy which could suppose that  
washing of cups and pots<sup>a</sup>,—the cleans-  
'the outside of cup and platter,'—they  
in for themselves acceptance with God!

u blind Pharisee, cleanse first that 26  
is within the cup and platter, that the  
: of them may be clean also.

this was to be done our SAVIOUR explained  
other occasion when He delivered a very  
discourse: namely, 'Bestow in alms the  
which are within.' See St. Luke xi. 41, and  
e there. At the same time, there is doubt-  
nveyed an injunction to cultivate inward  
l purity and holiness; as in St. Luke xi.  
—which see: for *there*, instead of '*they* are

<sup>a</sup> St. Mark vii. 4 and 8.

full of extortion and excess,' (namely the clatter<sup>o</sup>;) it is said,—'your inward part is ravening and wickedness.'

And this contrast of the inward impurity of the *Pharisees* with their fair exterior is what the LORD proceeds to denounce a further 'Woe

- 27 Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto  
sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful  
outward, but are within full of dead  
28 bones, and of all uncleanness. Ever  
also outwardly appear righteous unto men,  
but within ye are full of hypocrisy and  
iniquity.

And "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; man looketh on the outward appearance; but the LORD looketh on *the heart*."<sup>p</sup>

The point of this rebuke evidently consists in the contrast between the outside and the inside of a sepulchral chamber. Outwardly, white-washed with chalk and adorned with colours, the sepulchres of the Jews 'appeared beautiful;' but inwardly, they were full of defilement. And so our LORD declares, were the Scribes and Pharisees!.... He had said something very like this on another occasion<sup>q</sup>, but it was *not* the same thing. The comparison in the text was, (a

<sup>o</sup> See above, ver. 25. The same word is rendered 'eat' in the one Gospel, and 'ravening' in the other.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

<sup>q</sup> See St. Luke xi. 44, and the

be expected,) in common use among the Jews. See Acts xxiii. 3, and consider Psalm v. 9. . . . Observe the transition to what follows. Our LORD's speech is still among the graves.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, 29 hypocrites ! because .ye build the tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in 30 the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the Prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses 31 unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the Prophets.

The Reader should compare these verses with St. Luke xi. 47 and 48, and read the notes thereon.

By professing that they would not have shared the guilt of their Fathers in slaying the Prophets, the 'Scribes and Pharisees' admitted that they were *the children of those who slew the Prophets*; and it is implied that they had inherited the murderous disposition of their sires also. The meaning is, in fact, partly illustrated by the expression 'generation of vipers,' in ver. 33; that is, '*offspring of vipers*:' by which it is implied that these men derived from their Fathers,—inherited by their very birth,—a satanic nature. As our LORD elsewhere says,—“Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the lusts of your Father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning†.”

† St. John viii. 44.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your Fathers.

As indeed, in three days, they did: yea, they filled it to overflowing. But, till their 'iniquity' (like that of the Amorites of old,) 'was full,' God withheld His judgments\*. In the meanwhile, it was because CHRIST was well aware of the murderous course they were bent upon pursuing, not only towards Himself, but towards His Disciples likewise, that He thus bitterly denounced the Hypocrisy with which they affected grief while they garnished the sepulchres of the Prophets whom their Fathers had already slain. Consider by all means 1 Thessalonians ii. 14 to 16.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?

'Serpents,' — for they resembled "that old Serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan†:" and 'generation of vipers,' (as both He and His Forerunner had already called them‡,) for a reason assigned in the note on ver. 31. As they partook of the deeds of the Evil One, how could they escape his end?

With which terrible words, our LORD gathers up all the awful denunciations which go before. And if, in the opinion of any, these should appear

\* Consider Gen. xv. 16 and 1 Thess. ii. 16. See also St. Mark ii. 6, 7, 8; and the notes there.

† Rev. xx. 2: xii. 9.

‡ Matth. iii. 7: St. Luke iii. 7: St. Matth. xii. 34.

not altogether in accordance with the sayings of CHRIST elsewhere recorded,—let the occasion be first considered<sup>z</sup>: and next, let it be observed, that “throughout these dreadful declarations, it is the cause of the Widow, and of His martyred Apostles, and of His FATHER’S Honour, which kindles in our LORD the Divine charity which burned forth in these judgments<sup>y</sup>.” But above all let us remember that we know nothing concerning Him, nor can know, save what He hath Himself seen fit to reveal. Long-suffering He is; but only in order to bring men to Repentance<sup>z</sup>. Kind and gentle, also; but only with the merciful and upright. “With the froward, Thou wilt shew Thyself froward<sup>a</sup>.” When the season of probation is ended, our LORD reveals Himself no longer as a merciful SAVIOUR, but as a terrible Judge<sup>b</sup>: and we only deceive ourselves if we rely on *one* of the Divine Attributes to the exclusion of the others.

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you Prophets, and Wise men, and Scribes: .

When our LORD employed the sayings which follow, on a different occasion, (which St. Luke alone records,) He prefaced them with the words, Therefore also said *the Wisdom of GOD<sup>c</sup>*. CHRIST is therefore ‘the WISDOM of GOD;’ and it is He who ‘sent’ Prophets, (that is, men divinely in-

<sup>z</sup> See the note prefixed to the present chapter. <sup>y</sup> Williams.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. ii. 4, and 2 St. Pet. iii. 9, 15.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. xviii. 26.

<sup>b</sup> See the note on St. Luke xix. 44: also on St. Matth. xxi. 44.

<sup>c</sup> St. Luke xi. 49, where see the note.

spired to declare the mind of God and His will,)—Wise men, (that is, persons full of Divine Wisdom,)—and Scribes, (that is, persons authorized to interpret and teach the Law of CHRIST'S Kingdom<sup>d</sup>),—in order to make the wickedness of the nation undeniable, and without excuse. Instead of 'Prophets and Wise men and Scribes,' it is (in St. Luke) 'Prophets and Apostles.'

and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify: and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city:

Thus St. Stephen was stoned<sup>e</sup>: St. James was slain with the sword<sup>f</sup>: St. Peter was crucified<sup>g</sup>: the Apostles were imprisoned with scourging<sup>h</sup>: St. Paul and Barnabas were persecuted from city to city<sup>i</sup>.—Take notice of the propriety with which from ver. 34 to the end of this chapter, has been selected as the Gospel for St. Stephen's Day.

35 that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar.

That our SAVIOUR should have reckoned 'righte-

<sup>d</sup> As in St. Matth. xiii. 52.

<sup>e</sup> Acts vii. 59.

<sup>f</sup> Acts xii. 1 to 3.

<sup>g</sup> Consider St. John xxi. 18, 19: 2 St. Pet. i. 14.

<sup>h</sup> Acts v. 18, 40.

<sup>i</sup> Acts xiii. 50: xiv. 5, 6, 19, 20.

ous Abel' as the first of His Martyrs, is what we should expect; but who is this Zacharias, whom He mentions as if he were *the last*? Zechariah, (one of the Twelve minor prophets, B. C. 520,) was indeed 'the son of Berechiah<sup>j</sup>;' but it is nowhere recorded concerning him that he suffered martyrdom. On the other hand, there is an account in the Book of Chronicles of the martyrdom of a Zechariah, which corresponds entirely with what our SAVIOUR here declares: but then the Zechariah there spoken of is described as 'the son of *Jehoiada* the priest<sup>k</sup>.' Moreover, he was slain in the time of King Joash<sup>l</sup>, and does not seem in any sense to have been *the last* of that 'noble army' to which he belonged. On the whole, however, it seems reasonable to suppose that *this* was the person to whom our SAVIOUR here makes allusion. The recorded name of his Father is no real obstacle, as we have elsewhere repeatedly shewn<sup>m</sup>: while his remarkable dying words, ("The LORD look upon it, and require it<sup>n</sup>!") even suggest the high probability that one who so fell 'in the Court of the House of the LORD,' should have been in some special way avenged by Him "who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong<sup>o</sup>." 'The voice of his blood' may well

<sup>j</sup> Zech. i. 1.      <sup>k</sup> 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.      <sup>l</sup> About B. C. 840.

<sup>m</sup> See the notes on St. Luke iii. 23, (on the words 'son of Heli;') and on ver. 27, (on the words 'Son of Salathiel;') above all, on ex. 36, on the words 'son of Cainan.' Consider also how frequently the Jews bore *two* names. Of this, the Gospel contains many instances: as, St. Matth. x. 2, 3: Acts iv. 36: xii. 12, 25: iii. 9, &c.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Chron. xxiv. 22.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. cxlvi. 6.



have 'cried unto God from the ground<sup>p</sup>,' *as in the case of Abel* . . . "That Thou mayest take the matter into Thine Hand," (saith the Psalmist,) "the poor committeth himself unto Thee<sup>q</sup>."

A remarkable circumstance remains to be mentioned in connexion with these words of our LORD. The Jewish Historian, Josephus, relates that an eminent and most excellent citizen, named 'Zacharias, the son of *Baruch*,' was actually slain in the Temple, immediately before the destruction of the City; his only offence being that he denounced the wickedness of his countrymen. This event, at the time of our LORD's speaking, was yet future, and therefore cannot be thought to be the particular event to which He alludes. The suggestion, however, may be permitted, that since this man's murder must have been very present to the mind of Him who spoke the words of the text, (for "precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His Saints<sup>r</sup>;" and He "calleth those things which be not, as though they were<sup>s</sup>;" )—He will have so divinely shaped His words that they obtained double fulfilment. And thus, besides other blessed consequences, the first Believers, calling to mind His saying, will have found in the event, when it took place, a striking confirmation of their Faith in the Divine Speaker; whose words will have proved, like those of His ancient prophets, capable of repeated accomplishment. In this way, Ab

<sup>p</sup> Gen. iv. 10. Consider the allusion to that cry in Heb. xii. 2

<sup>q</sup> Ps. x. 14.

<sup>r</sup> Ps. cxvi. 15.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. iv. 17.

and Zacharias will have been *literally* the first and the last of the Martyrs whose blood was avenged by the destruction of Jerusalem.

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

The allusion in the text is obviously to the Destruction of Jerusalem: and as previously on approaching the City He had wept over it<sup>t</sup>, so now as He also take leave of it, or rather of His enemies, with a similar exclamation of pity.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

Rather, "How often *have I wished!*" . . . . "The Holy Spirit speaks which taught David to address me with this allusion, 'hide me under the shadow Thy wings;' and gave him the solemn promise 'He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust!'"

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the LORD.

And with those words, He "went out, and de-

Williams; quoting Ps. xvii. 8: xci. 4: and see lviii. 1, and lxi. 4.

parted from the Temple<sup>a</sup> ;” leaving the House ‘ desolate’ indeed, for He, (its Glory,) had departed!

The self-same lamentation over Jerusalem had already flowed from the same blessed lips, on altogether a different occasion<sup>x</sup>. Its concluding words seem to imply, ‘ Ye shall not see Me, until ye shall be willing to recognize in Me your MESSIAH.’ whereby the Divine Speaker refers to the Day, yet future, when He will gather together the outcasts of Israel<sup>y</sup>; and those words of the cxviii<sup>a</sup> Psalm which were lately heard on the lips of a few faithful persons, when the SAVIOUR entered His Capital<sup>z</sup>, shall be poured forth in welcome by the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, and become the spontaneous utterance of every tongue<sup>a</sup>.

“ Be it so that these things are marvellous in our eyes, and that we discover no traces of their approach. Is anything too hard for God? What if the iniquity of His people should be removed in a day<sup>b</sup>, and a nation be born at once<sup>c</sup>? What if ‘at the second time,’ He should make Himself known to His brethren<sup>d</sup>? Then peradventure will be accomplished what cannot without violence be understood either of the destruction of Jerusalem, or of the Day of Judgment; then shall they look on Him whom they pierced<sup>e</sup>, and say Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD<sup>f</sup>.”

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xxiv. 1.

<sup>x</sup> See St. Luke xiii. 34, 35.

<sup>y</sup> Consider Is. xlix. 20 to 22: lx. 4: lxvi. 12.

<sup>z</sup> See St. Matth. xxi. 9, 15, &c.

<sup>a</sup> See Philip. ii. 10.

<sup>b</sup> Zech. iii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Is. lxvi. 8.

<sup>d</sup> Acts vii. 13.

<sup>e</sup> St. John xix. 37, quoting Zech. xii. 10. Compare Rev. i. 7.

<sup>f</sup> Churton.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 CHRIST foretelleth the destruction of the Temple : 3 what and how great calamities shall be before it : 29 the signs of His coming to Judgment. 36 And because that day and hour is unknown, 42 we ought to watch like good servants, expecting every moment our Master's coming.

THE attentive Reader of the Gospel will be careful to approach the present chapter with the solemn remembrance of the preceding one full in his recollection. After our LORD's stern leave-taking of the Scribes and Pharisees,—(those hypocrites who had either led astray or devoured 'the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand,')—it follows :

XXIV. AND JESUS went out, and departed from the Temple : and His Disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple.

The blessed Company, in departing, are found to have lingered about the Porch. Their Master's recent intimation of approaching judgments which were to overtake the City, and the unusual solemnity of His discourses throughout this eventful

Day, may well have suggested remarks on the massive proportions, and gorgeous splendour of the edifice they were leaving, and which seemed as if it had been built for Eternity; but who must perforce share the destruction of Jerusalem itself. They 'spake,' (says St. Luke,) 'of the Temple,—how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts<sup>a</sup>;' and 'one of His Disciples,' (St. Peter perhaps,) 'saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here<sup>b</sup>.' Then upon, repeating a solemn declaration which had already uttered<sup>c</sup>, and as if in allusion to saying of the prophet Haggai, 'before a stone was laid upon a stone<sup>d</sup>,'—it is added :

- 2 And JESUS said unto them, See ye not these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And so it actually came to pass, when Jerusalem was at last taken by the Romans after a five months' siege; the Temple was destroyed by fire, and a conflagration raged with such fury, that it seemed as if not only the Temple but the very hill on which it stood, was about to be consumed. Consider our LORD's prophetic allusion to this in St. Matth. xxii. 7. Not one stone of the Temple was left upon another; for the plough passed its site: according to the prophecy of Jeremi-

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xxi. 5.

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark xiii. 1: where see the

<sup>c</sup> See St. Luke xix. 44.

<sup>d</sup> Hag. ii. 15.

quoting by name the words of a yet older prophet, — ‘Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, *Zion shall be ploughed like a field*, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the House as the high places of a forest<sup>e</sup>.’ See more in the note on St. Mark xiii. 2.

We trace the SAVIOUR’S footsteps from the city gate in the direction of the Mount of Olives; where He took His seat, and thence surveyed the beautiful spectacle which the City presented. The Temple, in particular, was conspicuous from that spot<sup>f</sup>; covered with plates of gold, and of a most dazzling whiteness, — which must now have reflected the glories of the setting Sun. “The time and circumstances were such as rendered it the most solemn evening that the world has ever witnessed before or since, when we consider what the words were which had been last spoken, — the scene, — and the persons who were now assembled<sup>g</sup>.” Four of the Disciples, — St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and St. Andrew<sup>h</sup>, — at last approached Him with a twofold question; in reply to which, the Holy One delivered His tremendous predictions respecting both the Destruction of Jerusalem and the consummation of all things.

And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, <sup>3</sup> the Disciples came unto Him privately, say-

<sup>e</sup> Jer. xxvi. 18, quoting Micah iii. 12.

<sup>f</sup> St. Mark xiii. 3.

<sup>g</sup> Williams.

<sup>h</sup> See St. Mark xiii. 3.

ing, Tell us, when shall these things be? what *shall be* the sign of Thy coming, at the end of the World?

As already intimated, this was a twofold question; and twofold, in like manner, was the answer. Unless this be attended to, all that follows will be hopelessly confused,—having reference, not to the Fall of the City; now, to the End of the World. The Disciples ask, (1<sup>stly</sup>) ‘When shall *these* things be?’ ‘and what sign will there be when *these things* shall come to pass<sup>i</sup>?’—(which phrase should be observed, denotes that overthrow of ‘these great buildings<sup>k</sup>,’ to which our Saviour had been making recent allusion :) and ‘What shall be the sign of Thy Coming, at the End of the World?’

On all this, it has been well remarked,—‘eager inquirers, not understanding things that they knew not even how to ask information about with that distinctness of thought and precision which we learn from looking back upon the history. Through ignorance, they coupled together two questions really quite distinct. In their eyes they must have seemed very strange to them, as they were, and expecting the Kingdom of God as the glory of God’s people Israel, to hear of magnificent and costly buildings of the Temple being thrown down. They must have remembered what Joshua did when he said to the LORD, ‘An

<sup>i</sup> St. Luke xxi. 7.

<sup>k</sup> St. Mark xiii.

t Thou do unto Thy great Name!<sup>1</sup> For if Jerusalem was to be destroyed, they knew not how to think where the Kingdom of God was to be, or what the prophecies of its glories were to be fulfilled. Nothing less than the End of the World, seemed to them, could be the occasion of such overthrow. So they asked at once about the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem, and the final coming of our Lord at the End of the World<sup>m</sup>." And yet, "in this their ignorance or confusion of thought," (remarks a pious writer,) "they were still wiser than the most learned: for they seem to have gathered from some of our Lord's sayings that there was some intimate *connexion* between the two events; though how to separate the type from the antitype, the lesser from the more full accomplishment, they knew not. Thus did they, in their ignorance, as babes, surpass the wisdom of the wise<sup>n</sup>."

Our Lord commences His reply to the inquiry of the Disciples, in the next verse; and His reply occupies the whole of the present and the following chapter.

And JESUS answered and said unto them, <sup>4</sup> Take heed that no man deceive you. For <sup>5</sup> many shall come in My Name, saying, I am CHRIST; and shall deceive many.

"And the time draweth near," (it is added in

Josh. vii. 9. <sup>m</sup> From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. C. Marriott-Williams.



St. Luke's Gospel;) "go ye not therefore after them." This then is the first 'sign' to which our LORD directed the attention of His Church; and we shall find that He recurs to it, in ver. 23. In the Acts, one remarkable instance of the foretold imposture is recorded in the history of Simon Magus<sup>p</sup>; and profane Historians relate others. "It may be observed," (says a thoughtful writer<sup>q</sup>), "that as Josephus records the abundant fulfilment of all these things in the primary sense, the Revelation of St. John shadows forth the same as again to be fulfilled in the latter days<sup>r</sup>." Our LORD proceeds to give His Disciples a second token in the two next verses, which are found in all the three Gospels<sup>s</sup>,—containing in each instance the same caution to the Disciples not to be terrified.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end  
7 is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

"And fearful sights and great signs shall there be from Heaven,"—it is added in St. Luke's Gospel; where see the note<sup>t</sup>.

<sup>p</sup> St. Luke xxi. 8.

<sup>q</sup> Acts viii. 9 to 11.

<sup>r</sup> Williams.

<sup>s</sup> See Rev. xiii. 13, 14, &c.

<sup>t</sup> St. Mark xiii. 7, 8. St. Luke xxi. 9, 10, 11.

<sup>u</sup> On St. Luke xxi. 11

All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. 8

Rather, 'of *birth-pangs*.' The expression is remarkable, and in the highest degree suggestive,—recalling those many other places of Scripture where Creation is spoken of in kindred terms : now, as groaning and travailing<sup>x</sup>,—now, as destined to undergo a process of 'Regeneration'. It seems here to be implied that the beginning of that glorious change,—the birth-day of the new Creation<sup>z</sup>,—was already close at hand.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you : and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall 10 betray one another, and shall hate one another.

This will be found given much more fully by St. Mark,—to whose Gospel the Reader is referred<sup>a</sup>.

And many false prophets shall rise, and 11 shall deceive many. And because iniquity 12 shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Rather, 'of *the* many ;' that is, 'of most.' Our LORD therefore, here says, that while many will renounce the Faith, (for *that* is the 'offence' spoken

<sup>a</sup> Consider St. John xvi. 21.

<sup>x</sup> Rom. viii. 22.

<sup>y</sup> See St. Matth. xix. 28, and the note there.

<sup>z</sup> See the note on St. Matth. iii. 17, &c.

<sup>a</sup> See St. Mark xiii. 9 to 13, and the notes there.

of in ver. 10); and many will pervert it, (for *that* is the work of the 'false prophets' noticed in ver. 11); the love of the larger number will experience decay. And St. Paul marks the fulfilment of his LORD's words in several places <sup>b</sup>.

These 'false prophets' (together with the 'false Christs' in ver. 5,) will be found named again in verse 24. It is instructive to compare the place with 1 St. John iv. 1, and 2 St. Peter ii. 1.

- 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

This is the perpetual counsel and promise of the Gospel. To Patience there must be added Perseverance,—*Endurance*, to *the end*. See the note on St. Matthew x. 22, (where the same saying is found to recur;) and consider how large a share of notice, so much larger than might have been supposed by one who had never attended to the circumstance, this grace of Patience, Endurance, or Abiding, (for the word in every case is the same,) obtains in the Gospel. "The LORD direct your hearts into the Love of GOD and into the patient waiting for CHRIST<sup>c</sup>," is almost a summary of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians <sup>d</sup>.

- 14 And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the World for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

<sup>b</sup> See 2 Tim. i. 15: iv. 10, 16. Heb. x. 26.    <sup>c</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 5.

<sup>d</sup> See also the references in the footnote on St. Matth. iv. 7.

‘The end,’ namely, of Jerusalem,—already referred to in ver. 6. When He declared that ‘the Gospel must first be published among all nations<sup>e</sup>,’ our LORD’s words are not to be narrowed to suit our notions of what may be effected by ordinary human exertions. “Of the labours and success of the Apostolic body, what may we not infer, when St. Paul alone fully preached the Gospel almost throughout the Roman Empire, from Arabia to Damascus, from Jerusalem to Illyricum, in Italy and in Spain<sup>f</sup>? Scarcely a city of eminence in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, or in Greece, but was blessed with his presence, and enlightened by the doctrine of this great Teacher of the Gentiles. In Rome itself, he bore witness to the Truth; and in the palace of the Emperor, he was not without his converts<sup>g</sup>.” From his Epistle to the Colossians, we learn that already had the Gospel been ‘preached to the whole Creation which is under Heaven:’ that it had presented itself to the Colossians, as to ‘all the World<sup>h</sup>.’ ‘Have they not heard?’ (he asks;) ‘Yes verily, their sound’ — (meaning the voices of the Apostles, and thus interpreting a Prophecy,)—‘their sound went into all the Earth, and their words unto the ends of the World<sup>i</sup>.’ And even such a worldwide commission did their Divine Master give them, before His Ascension<sup>k</sup>.

Having hitherto foretold the remote signs of the

<sup>e</sup> St. Mark xiii. 10.      <sup>f</sup> See Gal. i. 17.    Rom. xv. 19, 24, 28.

<sup>g</sup> Churton,—quoting Phil. i. 13; iv. 22.

<sup>h</sup> Col. i. 6, 23.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. x. 18, quoting Ps. xix. 4.

<sup>k</sup> See St. Mark xvi. 15.

fall of Jerusalem, our LORD proceeds to describe the immediate tokens of its downfall. See the note on St. Luke xxi. 21.

- 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand :)

The place referred to,—Daniel ix. 27<sup>1</sup>,—is obscure and difficult ; but our LORD here helps us to fix the meaning of His prophet : for His words, as St. Luke relates them, were,—“ When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh<sup>m</sup>. ” The allusion therefore, is to the standards of the Roman army, (which were held in ‘abomination’ by the Jews both on account of the representations of the Emperor which they bore, and because the soldiers were known to offer sacrifice to them : ) and it is foretold that the day was coming when those hateful ensigns of desolation should be seen standing on holy ground, ‘where they ought not<sup>a</sup>’ ; that is, compassing ‘the Holy City<sup>o</sup>,’ round about

Thus then our Blessed LORD, having foretold in the preceding verses, first, what should be the remote signs of the destruction which was coming upon Jerusalem<sup>p</sup> ;—and next, the afflictions which must first befall His Church<sup>q</sup> ;—begins, in this

<sup>1</sup> Compare Dan. xi. 31 : xii. 11.

<sup>m</sup> St. Luke xxi. 20.

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark xiii. 14.

<sup>o</sup> St. Matth. iv. 5 : xxvii. 53.

<sup>p</sup> Verses 4 to 8.

<sup>q</sup> Verses 9 to 14.

place, to describe what should be the signal that he judgments of Heaven were close at hand; and to indicate to the believers what measures they should take in the hour of danger, to secure their own personal safety.

It will be perceived that the few words which our LORD adds parenthetically, ('let him that readeth understand,') are intended to recal the first words of Daniel ix. 25.

Then let them which be in Judæa flee into 16 the mountains :

"And let them which are in the midst of it," (that is, of Jerusalem,) "depart out." So it is added in St. Luke's Gospel,—where see the notes<sup>r</sup>. It is there shewn that a marvellous escape for the people of God was duly contrived by Divine Providence, even after the city was 'compassed with armies' for the first time: as well as what an unmistakeable token of coming danger was afterwards furnished, when Titus finally encircled the city with a wall.

let him which is on the housetop not 17 come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field 18 return back to take his clothes. And woe 19 unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !

These three verses will be found discussed in the notes on St. Mark xiii. 15, 16, 17.

<sup>r</sup> On St. Luke xxi. 21 and 22.

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on the sabbath day :

And doubtless the Christians *did* make these petitions theirs ; doubtless also in respect both they were heard. As to *the season* of flight, we *know* what happened : for the alluded to in the note on St. Luke xxi. 21 put it into the power of any one who leave the city, took place in the beginning of *ber*, A.D. 66,—when the weather was yet most favourable for travelling. Or, if any remain hind till the beginning of the final siege took place four years later, the result would be still more striking : for that event befell the months of April or May.

The Law which forbade more than ‘ a sabbath-day’s journey’ on the sabbath-day<sup>a</sup>, was acknowledged by the Christian converts from Judaism at the time of the siege of Jerusalem ; sanctions of the ceremonial Law, though they could not be any longer considered binding on their conscience, might not be all at once disregarded simply because Light and Immortality had been brought to light in the Gospel<sup>b</sup>. Thus we find Paul testifying his desire to keep the Jewish Law at Jerusalem<sup>c</sup> : and conforming to the Law in many respects<sup>d</sup>. But it is clear that the flight from the City to the distance of a

<sup>a</sup> Ex. xvi. 29. Compare Acts i. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Consider Rom. xiv. 5, Gal. v. 3, &c.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xviii. 21 : xx. 16.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xxi. 20.

nile, (and 'a Sabbath-day's journey' was no more,) could have been no boon while an enemy occupied the country, and there was a hostile party within the walls, ready to overtake and destroy the fugitives. Hence, then, the motive of the first Christians for praying that their day of flight might not be found to correspond with the Sabbath-day.

for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the World to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The argument is,—I bid you flee for your lives, escaping to the mountains; and exhort you to pray that, when that hour arrives, neither feebleness of body, nor the severity of the season, nor the impediment of the Sabbath, may prevent you from availing yourselves of the timely warning: *for then shall be great tribulation.*'

Josephus, after going over a sickening enumeration of the several horrors of the siege, (which will be found noticed more in detail in the note on St. Mark xiii. 19), says that finding it impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity, he will remark briefly that either did any other city ever suffer such miseries, or did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this, from the beginning of the world. "The blended horrors of war and sedition, of famine and pestilence, were grievous and astonishing, beyond example and beyond conception; and if we except the days when the



Deluge overwhelmed a whole world of sinners, never did there perish so many of the human race in so short a period of time<sup>x</sup>."

- 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

See a long note on this, in the Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel. "Many have shewn how very accurately all things were fulfilled at the taking of Jerusalem: and the fulfilment was no doubt highly striking and remarkable; for of course the circumstances were as exact as if our LORD's words had been historical and not prophetical." But, as the same writer with much truth adds,—"It is easier to see such literal fulfilments than to follow out what higher meanings our LORD's language may contain; nor indeed is the pursuit of the former in itself so important; but being more sensible and palpable, the literal fulfilment of prophecy is better calculated for those weak believers who require such evidence<sup>x</sup>." In the highest degree *interesting* it must however be allowed to be, and ever worthy of our attention; though the testimony of History to the Truth of CHRIST's words can of course add nothing to the Faith of him who entertains right notions of God. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar<sup>a</sup>."

<sup>x</sup> Churton.

<sup>a</sup> Williams.

<sup>y</sup> St. Mark xiii. 20.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. iii. 4.

Our LORD then again takes up the subject of the false Christs, with which He had begun His Discourse<sup>b</sup>. False claimants to be the anointed Redeemer of Israel were to arise; and the vain, but most seductive pretensions of these Impostors, was the special sign with which He both began and ended His reply to the inquiry, 'What sign will there be when these things shall come to pass<sup>c</sup>?'

By this however it is not meant that the four next verses belong to the former half of the present prophecy,—that is, are to be referred to the destruction of Jerusalem rather than to the end of the World. We think, on the contrary, that the transition is made at this very place, and that it is made by the word '*then*'—with which verse 23 commences<sup>d</sup>. But '*then*' is a word of ambiguous signification: sometimes implying 'at that *same* time:' sometimes, '*next* in order of time,'—which last we suspect, is in the main its meaning here: yet not exclusively, as is shewn in the notes on verses 25 and 26.—It will be perceived therefore, that, besides a prediction of the remoter<sup>e</sup>, and the nearer<sup>f</sup> signs of the Destruction of the City; our LORD may be thought to have supplied His Church with a prediction of the remoter<sup>g</sup>, as well as the nearer<sup>h</sup> signs of His second Advent. That *the same* signs should be appealed to, in either case, need create no surprise. We know from other parts of Scripture that the signs will actually be the same<sup>i</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> See above, verses 4 and 5,—and the note. <sup>c</sup> St. Luke xxi. 7.

<sup>d</sup> And so St. Mark xiii. 21. <sup>e</sup> Ver. 4 to 14. <sup>f</sup> Ver. 15 to 22.

<sup>g</sup> Ver. 23 to 28. <sup>h</sup> Ver. 29 to 33. <sup>i</sup> See on St. Mark xiii. 32.

23 Then if any man shall say unto ;  
24 here *is* CHRIST, or there ; believe *it* i  
there shall arise false Christs, and fa  
phets, and shall shew great signs a  
ders ; insomuch that, if *it were* possi  
shall deceive the very elect.

Rather “so as to,” (that is “in or  
“deceive, if possible, even the elect ;” th  
Christians.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

“The description of the seducers wh  
be the ruin of multitudes, was not so mi  
full as the Holy JESUS, in compassion  
who believed on Him, and to those wh  
saw to be expedient. This point ther  
graciously resumes ; and in the verse  
quoted, and some which follow, delin  
impostors with such particularity, that  
had read the prediction, (and it was  
early, that all might read it,) must h  
blind not to see its accomplishment, if it  
accomplished ; and mad, to be deluded, i  
behold it. His admonition was :”

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto ;  
hold, He is in the desert ; go not fo  
hold, *He is* in the secret chambers  
*it* not.

“And the Jewish Historian Josephus

<sup>k</sup> Compare St. Mark xiii. 22.

had been his design to illustrate this passage, informs us that false prophets and impostors prevailed on multitudes to follow them into the desert, promising there to display prodigies and signs; but that those who listened to them suffered the just punishment of their folly, and were either slain or dispersed by the Roman governor." One such case of imposture on the part of an Egyptian, is found alluded to in the Acts<sup>1</sup>. Other pretenders arose in Jerusalem itself. "Even at the last, when the Temple was in flames, multitudes of all ages flocked thither from the city, upon the proclamation of a false Prophet; and of six thousand assembled there, on this occasion, not one escaped the fire or the sword"<sup>m</sup>.

It is presumed, however, that by thus recurring to the subject of the 'false Christs and false prophets' who should appear about the time alluded to, our SAVIOUR referred to the impostors who should arise immediately *after* the destruction of the City<sup>n</sup>, even more than to those whose boastful pretensions attended that event. Nay, the words of such a wondrous Speaker may reasonably be suspected of yet greater depth and fulness; may be thought to include in their far-sighted scope and intention the remote, no less than the immediate future,—so that the reference will be general, and extend to the whole of those 'signs and lying wonders' of which St. Paul speaks as reserved

<sup>1</sup> See Acts xxi. 38, and the marginal note.

<sup>m</sup> Churton.

<sup>n</sup> See 1 St. John ii. 18.

for the days of 'the Man of Sin' which are to precede the final Advent of CHRIST<sup>o</sup>.

Many indeed have thought that from ver. 23, onwards, has reference *only* to the end of the World; but, as it seems, without sufficient reason. A view strictly in accordance with the nature of prophetic language in general would rather be, that while the warning was capable of a direct application to the days of the siege, and the period which came immediately after, our LORD's language was divinely contrived to be also descriptive of events yet more remote<sup>p</sup>. Thus He is found to have fashioned His predictions of the Destruction of Jerusalem<sup>q</sup>, and of the Destruction of the World<sup>r</sup>, unmistakeably on the same type, — in language which is intended to recal the History of the Destruction of Sodom. In which divine method there is no *ambiguity*, but there is wondrous depth and fulness, as well as a large amount of implied (and, it may well be thought, of unsuspected) doctrine. Doubtless, had our SAVIOUR pleased, He could have specified the hour and the day, the month and the year, when the events He spoke of should occur: but would the Church then have been as watchful, as we know she was,—

<sup>o</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 1 to 10. Consider however 1 Tim. iv. 1 to 3: 2 Tim. iii. 1 to 5: iv. 1 to 4. 2 St. Peter ii. 1: 1 St. John ii. 18: iv. 1, 3. Jude ver. 17, 18, &c.

<sup>p</sup> Consider such places of prophecy as Mal. iii. 1, 2, 3: Zech. xii. 10: St. Luke xiii. 35.

<sup>q</sup> Consider verses 16 to 18, above: and see the note on St. Mark xiii. 16.

<sup>r</sup> Consider St. Luke xvii. 28 to 32.

always 'looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the Day of God' ?' She is purposely kept in ignorance of 'the day' and 'the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh', in order that she may 'Watch.'

On the whole, therefore, we assume that, in ver. 3, our LORD makes a transition, and proceeds to the second part of His reply. He explains that His final Coming, (concerning the *signs* as well as the *time* of which the Disciples had asked Him,) would neither be so remote as to require a journey into 'the desert,' nor so obscure as to be confined to 'the secret chambers;' but would be known from one end of the World unto the other:—

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be: for wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

This proverbial saying, like so many others employed by our LORD, is not without difficulty. It seems here to imply, that as the place where a carcase has fallen is discoverable at once by the concourse of birds of prey which troop instantly to the spot,—(for as Job says of the eagle, "her eyes behold a-far off; her young ones also suck up blood; and *where the slain are, there is she*":\*)—even, so, at the end of the World, there will be

\* 2 St. Pet. iii. 12. See also 1 Cor. i. 7. Tit. ii. 13, &c.

† St. Matth. xxv. 13. See xxiv. 42, 44. St. Mark xiii. 33, 35. ‡ Luke xii. 39, 40: xxi. 36. 1 Thess. v. 2. 2 St. Peter iii. 10, &c.

§ Job xxxix. 29, 30. See also Habakkuk i. 8.

no doubt or question as to the place *where* CHRIST is to be found<sup>†</sup>. The LAMB which was slain will be discoverable at once by the thousand thousands who will be congregated around Him. Where *He* is, there will the Saints<sup>‡</sup> be gathered together.

“The extraordinary instinct in birds of prey,<sup>‡</sup> (as one has remarked,) “by which they gather together from all quarters, even from beyond seas to where a carcase falls, has often been observed as if it were something supernatural. It appears to be Nature’s emblem of the manner in which beyond all that can be accounted for; by human reason, the good of all ages and countries flock together around the Body of CHRIST crucified<sup>†</sup>.”

At the same time we are disposed to believe that the Divine Speaker shaped His prediction in this striking language not without reference to the victorious eagles of the Roman army which should flock about the many slain of Jerusalem in the day of her downfall: for the destruction of that city is obviously to be regarded at once as type and an earnest of that final Coming of CHRIST to take vengeance on His enemies, of which He is here speaking. The capture of Jerusalem by the Romans is foretold by Moses in language truly apposite to the present occasion: ‘The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the Earth,—*as the eagle flieth*<sup>‡</sup>.’

<sup>†</sup> Consider St. Luke xvii. 37.    <sup>‡</sup> See Is. xl. 31.    \* William

<sup>‡</sup> Deut. xxviii. 49. This must not be thought conclusive however for see Jer. xlviii. 40; xlix. 22. Lam. iv. 19. Ezek. xvii. 3, 1 Hos. viii. 1, in none of which places the Romans are spoken of.

With reference to the days of the Destruction of Jerusalem, and the great tribulation<sup>b</sup> which should then prevail, our LORD proceeds :—

Immediately after the tribulation of those 29 days shall the Sun be darkened, and the Moon shall not give her light, and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the heavens shall be shaken :

‘Immediately,’ — in the sight of GOD: with whom ‘one day is . . . . as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.’ But in truth, the word here rendered ‘immediately,’ means rather ‘straightway,’ or ‘in due course.’ Almost eighteen hundred years since the beginning of ‘those days’ have elapsed already; and the end is not yet.

And this is almost all we shall offer on the language or the imagery of the text; the frequent recurrence of which, in the Old Testament, is certainly very remarkable<sup>d</sup>. Its precise meaning, since the events alluded to belong to the department of unfulfilled prophecy, the result must be left to determine. True indeed it is that Sun, Moon, and Stars are often spoken of figuratively, —are sometimes put symbolically for CHRIST, and His Church, and His Saints: true also it is, that, as at our SAVIOUR’S Birth it was foretold that ‘every valley should be filled, and every mountain and

<sup>b</sup> See above ver. 21.

• 2 St. Pet. iii. 8.

<sup>d</sup> See Is. xiii. 10: Ezek. xxxii. 7: Joel ii. 31, 32: iii. 15, 16. Amos viii. 9.



hill should be brought low\*,—words which do not admit of being understood literally,—so may the present place be rightly explained by those many ancient Fathers who interpret it altogether in a figurative manner. For ourselves, we prefer to take our LORD's words in the most literal sense they will possibly bear; suggesting only that beneath that literal sense and literal fulfilment, there may lie a mystical intention also†. If the Sun 'put on mourning' at the Crucifixion, why may he not 'be darkened' at the second Advent? But it is safer to meditate on the mysterious predictions of the text, than to pretend to explain them.

- 30 and then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the Earth mourn,

Thus far is peculiar to the present Gospel. '*The sign of the Son of Man*' is generally explained to be the Cross: but does it mean more than 'the Son of Man?' The mourning of 'the tribes of the Earth' is from Zechariah xii. 12.

and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.

The Reader should compare this description of CHRIST's final Advent to judgment, with Daniel

\* St. Luke iii. 5, from Is. xl. 4.

† Compare Rev. vi. 12, and especially 14, 13, with Is. xxxiv. 4. See Rev. viii. 10, 11, 12: ix. 1: xii. 4. See also Is. xiii. 13. Heb. xii. 26, 27. Again Dan. xii. 3. 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. Phil. ii. 16.

vii. 13, and Revelation i. 7<sup>e</sup>. 'Those *clouds*,' (says Bishop Pearson,) 'were anciently expounded by the Jews of the glorious attendance of the Angels waiting upon the Son of Man<sup>h</sup>.'

And He shall send His Angels with a 31 great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.

He shall 'send forth His Angels;' for these are the 'ministers of His, that do His pleasure<sup>l</sup>.' Moreover there will be 'a great sound of a trumpet;' 'for the LORD Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God<sup>k</sup>.' 'The *four winds*' are spoken of, as there are said to be 'four corners of the Earth<sup>l</sup>.'

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; 32 when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these 33 things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

Not, "*it* is near," but "*He*," that is, the Judge spoken of in ver. 30, "is near." St. James alludes to this place when he says, "Behold, the Judge

<sup>g</sup> Also St. Matth. xvi. 27: xxvi. 64. <sup>h</sup> Compare Heb. xii. 1.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. ciii. 21. Consider St. Matth. xiii. 39, 41, 49.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16. So 1 Cor. xv. 52.

<sup>l</sup> See Isa. xliiii. 5, 6: (also St. Matth. viii. 11.) Ezek. xxxvii. 9: Zech. ii. 6: Rev. vii. 1.

standeth before the door<sup>m</sup>." The Reader is referred to the note on St. Mark xiii. 29, for some remarks on the preceding verses.

"Thus far, then, CHRIST speaks of the end of the World and its signs, as He had spoken of the Destruction of Jerusalem and its signs. He next proceeds to reveal as much as seems good to Him concerning the time when the two events should respectively take place. Observe that He still speaks of '*these things*,' as the words are used in the question put to Him,—namely as concerning *the Destruction of Jerusalem*, which He had foretold; and by doing so, had caused the question to be put to Him<sup>n</sup>." His words were,—

14 Verily I say unto you, This generation  
shall not pass, till all these things be ful-  
15 filled. Heaven and Earth shall pass away,  
but My words shall not pass away.

This very solemn assurance which is found repeated in all the three Gospels<sup>o</sup>, clearly had reference to the existing race of the nation which our LORD addressed. See on St. Mark xiii. 31.

Thus far then of '*these things*.' Our LORD proceeds to speak of the other Day about which He had been asked,—'*the Day* of His Coming, and of the end of the World.' He says,—

3 But of that day and hour knoweth no

<sup>m</sup> St. James v. 9. See also Philip. iv. 5.

<sup>n</sup> From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. C. Marriott.

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark xiii. 30, 31: St. Luke xxi. 32, 33.

*man*, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but My FATHER only.

Concerning this verse, see on St. Mark xiii. 32.

But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also 37 the Coming of the Son of Man be. For as 38 in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until 39 the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be.

A similar reference to 'the days of Noe,' as typical of the final overthrow of the World, will be found to have been already made by our LORD on another occasion<sup>p</sup>. *Then*, He proceeded to recal the History of Sodom also<sup>q</sup>: but not now, because the fate of that guilty City has been already brought before us<sup>r</sup>.

Take notice that it would appear from what precedes, as if, although fearful signs "are to precede the last Judgment, yet that Day itself will come in a time of thoughtless security ; which seems to be intimated by the eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ; and still more so by the buying and selling, planting and building, 'as in the days of Lot'."

<sup>p</sup> St. Luke xvii. 26, 27.

<sup>q</sup> St. Luke xvii. 28 to 32.

<sup>r</sup> See above, ver. 16 to 18, where see the notes.

<sup>s</sup> Williams.

40 Then shall two be in the field: the one  
 41 shall be taken, and the other left. Two  
*women shall be grinding at the mill*; the one  
 shall be taken, and the other left.

Some remarks on this place will be found in the note on St. Luke xvii. 36.

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what  
 43 hour your LORD doth come. But know this,  
 that if the goodman of the house had known  
 in what watch the thief would come, he  
 would have watched, and would not have  
 44 suffered his house to be broken up. There-  
 fore be ye also ready: for in such an hour  
 as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

This warning is of perpetual recurrence<sup>†</sup>, and of general obligation: but what follows, to the end of the chapter, is addressed more particularly to those who are ‘made rulers over the LORD’s Household<sup>u</sup>.’ The place is to be compared with a portion of St. Luke’s twelfth chapter; of which, ver. 38 will be found a fitting introduction to ver. 42, above; while verses 39 and 40 of St. Luke correspond with verses 43 and 44 of the present chapter. A question asked by St. Peter follows in St. Luke’s Gospel,—‘LORD, speakest Thou this Parable unto us, or even to all<sup>x</sup>?’—out of which

<sup>†</sup> See above, the latter part of the note on ver. 26, together with the reference.

<sup>u</sup> See below, ver. 45: also 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2: Tit. i. 7: 1 St. Peter iv. 10.

<sup>x</sup> St. Luke xii. 41.

naturally arise the sayings which are found in the ensuing seven verses of the present chapter, and which also occur in St. Luke<sup>y</sup>. This must be allowed to be a very surprising circumstance; well deserving of our most reverent attention.

Who then is a faithful and wise Servant, 45 whom his Lord hath made ruler over his Household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his 46 Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make 47 him ruler over all His goods.

Every word here is suggestive. Take notice that he who is set over the Household, is but a Servant, after all: and of him it is required that he be not only faithful, but wise also. To zeal there must be added discretion. A 'ruler' he is; yet what is his office? Even, like a good Pastor, to feed the sheep and the little lambs of CHRIST's fold<sup>a</sup>, giving to each the 'milk' or the 'strong meat<sup>a</sup>,' '*in due season*:' "seasonably dispensing the Word of Life to a Household which is to be nourished with the food of Eternity<sup>b</sup>." What words shall describe the blessedness of the 'servant whom his LORD when He cometh shall find so doing?' 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant,' (it will be said;) 'thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler

<sup>y</sup> St. Luke xii. 42 to 46.

<sup>a</sup> St. John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

<sup>a</sup> Heb. v. 12, 14.

<sup>b</sup> Hilary.

over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord<sup>c</sup> !'—words which recal, if they do not help to explain, what is read above, in ver. 47.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in  
his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming:  
49 and shall begin to smite *his* fellow-servants,  
50 and to eat and drink with the drunken: the  
Lord of that servant shall come in a day  
when he looketh not for *Him*, and in an  
51 hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut  
him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion  
with the hypocrites: there shall be weep-  
ing and gnashing of teeth.

Concerning the last words, see the end of the note on St. Matthew viii. 12. With those which precede, compare 2 St. Peter iii. 3 to 10.—Take notice that Teachers of the Gospel are here addressed; who, if they neglect their duty, will have the same punishment as those who pretended to believe, but were in fact 'unbelievers<sup>d</sup>.'—Then follows the parable of 'the wise and foolish Virgins,'—which is again succeeded by the parable of 'the Talents.' Both are fitly introduced by the word of exhortation which is found above in ver. 42; or by that which St. Mark preserves in this place,—'And what I say unto you, I say unto all,—Watch<sup>e</sup> !'

<sup>c</sup> St. Matth. xxv. 21.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke xii. 46.

<sup>e</sup> St. Mark xiii. 37.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*The parable of the Ten Virgins, 14 and of the Talents. 31 Also the description of the last Judgment.*

THE parable of 'the Ten Virgins' with which the present chapter begins, and which is peculiar to the present Gospel, sets forth and enforces the duty of *Watchfulness*; taking up the solemn train of Exhortation with which the preceding chapter concludes. CHRIST is here the Bridegroom, while the Church, (as throughout the Song of Solomon,) is His Bride. This image has come before us repeatedly, already: in truth, it gives a colour to the language both of the Old and the New Testament\*. The time spoken of is *the End*,—whether of Life, or of the World. It need not perplex us that the Church, here, is represented both by the Bride and the Virgins; for, as all must perceive, and as we have so often remarked, neither Type nor Parable may be so pressed as if it were the very thing it signified. It is also to be observed that, as if to preclude any confusion of thought, the Bride is not once mentioned throughout the

\* See the notes on St. Matth. xxii. 3: St. John iii. 1, &c.



present Parable. We should ever in expounding a Parable, hold fast, throughout, the Lesson which it was chiefly intended to convey; and concerning which we are seldom left in doubt<sup>b</sup>.

XXV. THEN shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

This is scarcely intelligible without reference to the method of performing the Marriage Rite among the Jews. The Bride was conducted at evening by the Bridegroom from her Father's House to his own,—where a Feast awaited their arrival: and this act of bringing the Bride home, was the completion of the Marriage. She was attended by a company of Virgins, according to the allusion in the xlv<sup>th</sup> Psalm<sup>c</sup>; and it is plain from the course of the present narrative, that it was the office of at least some of these to wait for the approach of the Bridal procession,—even though its arrival might be delayed till midnight. But it was at least dark; so that the Virgins were perforce furnished with lamps.

*Ten* Virgins do not so much represent the whole body of Christian men who expect CHRIST's Coming, as two great sections of Believers<sup>d</sup>.—The Jews saw a singular propriety in the number ten,

<sup>b</sup> Consider St. Matth. xx. 16, and the note prefixed to that chapter: St. Luke xviii. 1, and 9. See also below, ver. 13.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. xlv. 14, 15.

<sup>d</sup> See below, the last note on ver. 4.

ich was the number of 'a company.' *Virgins* named,—because as many as wait for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and profess to 'love His appearing<sup>c</sup>,' are professors of a pure Faith.

And five of them were wise, and five *were* 2  
olish.

The two characters which were contrasted at the d of our LORD's Sermon on the Mount, are thus ought before us<sup>f</sup>. Take notice that *three out of* ~~we~~ suffer loss in the Parable of 'the Sower:' *while* here, *half* are rejected: in the parable of 'the Talents,' it is *one in three*: in the parable of 'the Pounds,' it is *one in ten*<sup>g</sup>: while, in the parable of 'the Marriage of the King's Son,' it is *one of an infinite number*<sup>h</sup>. The intention of this seems to have been to repress the inquiry, "LORD, are there few that be saved<sup>i</sup>?"

They that *were* foolish took their lamps, 3  
and took no oil with them: but the wise 4  
took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

In this, then, consisted their wisdom or their folly. It has been much disputed what is implied by the supply of oil spoken of here, and in verse

But surely we may be content with the explanation which most obviously presents itself. To 'have our loins girded about, and *our lights burning*, and to be ourselves like unto men that

<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 8.

<sup>f</sup> See St. Matth. vii. 24, 26.

<sup>g</sup> St. Luke xix. 13, 20.

<sup>h</sup> St. Matth. xxii. 11.

<sup>i</sup> St. Luke xiii. 23.

wait for their LORD when He will return from the Wedding,'—is the injunction delivered by CHRIST Himself to His Church<sup>k</sup>. Elsewhere, the Saints are termed the Light of the World<sup>l</sup>: they are compared to a lighted lamp or candle<sup>m</sup>; and they are commanded to 'let their light shine before men'. It is clear that men's 'sufficiency,' in all these respects, 'is of God °.' The gifts and graces of the SPIRIT, (of which *Oil* hath ever been an essential symbol<sup>p</sup>;) are evidently the Light we have to display. Nor will it suffice to exhibit this spectacle for a few days or hours. The lamp must be replenished, (as man has need of daily renewal,) or its flame will grow feeble, and at last expire.

Negligence, therefore, in obtaining supplies of grace,—a slothful service,—is clearly *that* against which the present Parable is specially intended as a warning. We shall read the same lesson in the Parable 'of the Talents,' which follows; and in the Parable of 'the Pounds,' which St. Luke records. A solemn warning, surely, to as many as imagine that nothing but open Sin will exclude from acceptance with God. The fault of the five foolish Virgins was, not that they had *no* oil, but that they had *not enough*; so that, at the end of

<sup>k</sup> St. Luke xii. 35, 36.

<sup>l</sup> St. Matth. v. 14. Compare Phil. ii. 15.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matth. v. 15, and St. Mark iv. 21, (where see the notes.)

<sup>n</sup> St. Matth. v. 16. Consider Job xviii. 6: xxi. 17.

<sup>o</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 5.

<sup>p</sup> Consider Exod. xxx. 25 to 31. Zech. iv. 11 to 14. Heb. i. 1

<sup>1</sup> St. John ii. 20, 27, &c.

ew hours, they were left in darkness. As already remarked, therefore, it is not so much *the whole body* of the Church which is represented by these two companies of Virgins, as the earnest and careful, on the one hand,—the slothful and careless, on the other. And observe, the foolish Virgins were not distinguishable from the wise, at first. Like the Tares among the wheat<sup>1</sup>, and the House described at the end of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, the outward show of all was equally promising, when they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. But he delayed his coming; and—

While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

The meaning of the original is that from a state of *drowsiness*, they fell into sound *slumber*. They expected the Bridegroom,—who hath now tarried more than eighteen hundred years. Meanwhile, first one, then another falls asleep<sup>2</sup>; and even those few who shall be alive at CHRIST's coming, once they will be taken by surprise, may be spoken of as roused from slumber by the Bridegroom's approach. Sleep moreover is the condition of too many at all times; whence the Apostolic Exhortation,—“Now is it high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed<sup>3</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> See the first note on St. Matth. xiii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See the first note on St. Luke vi. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Consider St. Matth. ix. 24, St. John xi. 11. 1 Cor. xv. 18, &c.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiii. 11.

- 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet Him.

‘A cry,’—for the LORD “will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God<sup>u</sup>.” And this takes place ‘*at midnight*,’ (when a loud cry sounds loudest !),—because “the Day of the LORD ~~is~~ cometh as a thief *in the night* <sup>x</sup>,”—and because CHRIST will appear ‘in an hour *when Men look not for Him* <sup>y</sup>.’ But there is no reason why we should doubt that CHRIST will come at midnight, literally.

- 7 Then all those Virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

But five of them ‘trimmed their lamps’ to no purpose. It was useless to raise and cleanse the wick, unless they had wherewith to feed the expiring flame also . . . The hasty preparation of the soul in the great and terrible day, to meet its God<sup>z</sup>, is here obscurely hinted at. Thrice happy he, who in that dreadful hour shall prove, like the Spouse in the xlv<sup>th</sup> Psalm, “all glorious *within* <sup>a</sup>”

- 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out.

Or rather, ‘are *going out*,’—as in the margin Little hand-lamps are spoken of, calculated to

<sup>u</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Thess. v. 2.

<sup>y</sup> See St. Matth. xxiv. 44, 50, and St. Luke xii. 46.

<sup>z</sup> See Amos iv. 12. <sup>a</sup> Ps. xlv. 13. Consider St. Luke xi. 36, &c.

n for a very short time. At the beginning, *all* e bright ; but the Bridegroom had delayed his urn from the Wedding, and the slender supply il was by this time exhausted . . . The misera- wish of the wicked, in the last Day, (miserable, ause so unavailing !) to supply their own lack Light from the brightness of the just,—who l then be about to ‘shine forth as the Sun in Kingdom of their Father<sup>b</sup>,’—is here foretold.

But the wise answered, saying, *Not so* : 9 t there be not enough for us and you : but ye rather to them that sell, and buy for urselves.

They answer abruptly and briefly, for the time hort : not unkindly, but humbly. Their answer plies, first, that there is no superfluous stock of rit among the Saints, which may be applied to edy the shortcomings of the less holy sort, st,’ (in the words of the Parable) ‘there be *not ough* for us and you.’ Nay, “there is none that th good, no, not one<sup>c</sup> ;” but “when ye shall e done all those things which are commanded i, say, We are unprofitable servants<sup>d</sup>.” Next, it mplied that he who *needs*, must *buy* <sup>e</sup>; and fur- r, that he who would *buy*, must not look to his ow men,—to beings, weak and poor and de- ident as himself,—but must ‘go to those who

St. Matth. xiii. 43.      <sup>c</sup> Ps. xiv. 3, quoted in Rom. iii. 12.

St. Luke xvii. 10.      Consider 1 St. Peter iv. 18.

Consider St. Matth. xiii. 44 and 46.

*sell:*’ to Him, in short, who alone hath an ample store, and who inviteth all to come and buy of Him; without money indeed and without price, yet not without earnest prayer and hearty endeavour. How fruitlessly those who, in their lifetime, have neglected opportunities, will seek to repair the omission ‘in the hour of Death and in the Day of Judgment,’—the conclusion of the Parable sets forth in calm but fearful language.

- 10 And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the Marriage: and the door was shut.

Concerning the shut door, the Reader is referred to the last note on St. Luke xi. 7. The phrase ‘they that were *ready*,’ supplies as it were, the key note of the Parable; and connects it closely with the warnings of the former chapter,—particularly with *that* in verse 44. But how shall language adequately suggest what is implied concerning the happiness of those who having waited long for their LORD, at last ‘went in with Him to the Marriage?’ “Mysterious and blissful words!” (exclaims a pious Writer;) “Here is the union of Earth with Heaven; the consummation of all spiritual joys, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Here is ‘the Marriage supper of the Lamb’, the Marriage feast which has been

‘ Is. lv. 1.

“ Rev. xix. 9.

often spoken of,—where is the good wine which the Heavenly Bridegroom hath kept to the last <sup>b</sup> !” . Thither are ‘the Wise’ admitted : ‘the foolish,’ excluded from the festive scene, find themselves in utter darkness<sup>1</sup> ;’ and this ‘near miss of happiness,’ (as Leighton remarks,) ‘is the greatest misery.’

Afterward came also the other Virgins, 11 crying, LORD, LORD, open to us. But He 12 answered and said, Verily I say unto you, know you not.

Even thus, “Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the House . . . hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, LORD, LORD, open unto us : and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are<sup>k</sup>.”

Our SAVIOUR CHRIST is said not to ‘know’ those whom He doth not *approve*, and acknowledge to be His. Consider St. Matthew vii. 23, where see the note. The knowledge thus hinted at is not only deep and intimate, but mutual also<sup>l</sup>. The door is now set wide open, and all are invited, most compelled to come in<sup>m</sup> ; but the day of probation comes to an end, and the Door is then

<sup>b</sup> Williams. <sup>1</sup> See the notes on St. Matth. viii. 11 and 12.

<sup>k</sup> St. Luke xiii. 24, 25.

<sup>l</sup> Consider St. John x. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 19. See also Phil. iii. 10.

<sup>m</sup> See St. Luke xiv. 21 to 23.



shut,—never more to be opened<sup>a</sup>. “No one’s penitence, no one’s prayer, no one’s groaning shall any more be admitted. That door is shut which received Aaron after his Idolatry,—which admitted David after his Adultery and Homicide; which not only did not repel Peter after his three-fold denial, but even delivered its keys to him<sup>c</sup>.”

What then is the sum of the matter? “The Day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night.... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober<sup>d</sup>.” And so it follows,

- 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

“Neither *the day* nor *the hour* :” as it is also said elsewhere<sup>e</sup>. And with these words, our Blessed LORD concludes His Parable.

“The Virgins were represented above, as *waiting* for their LORD ; while in the Parable which follows, we behold the Servants *working* for Him :—*there*, the inward spiritual rest of the Christian was described,—*here*, his external activity<sup>f</sup>.”

The Parable of ‘the Talents,’ to which our attention is next directed, resembles in many respects the Parable of ‘the Pounds :’ but the two are wholly distinct. While St. Matthew alone

<sup>a</sup> Consider St. Luke xix. 41, 42 : also xvi. 26.

<sup>c</sup> From an ancient Homily, quoted by Trench.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Thessa. v. 2, 6.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matth. xxiv. 50, and St. Luke xii. 46.

<sup>f</sup> Trench.

s the present Parable, the other is found to be peculiar to St. Luke's Gospel<sup>a</sup>.

For *the Kingdom of Heaven* is as a Man 14  
travelling into a far country, *who* called His  
15 servants, and delivered unto them His  
Talents. And unto one He gave five talents, 15  
unto another two, and to another one; to every  
man according to his several ability; and  
straightway took his journey.

Even so, CHRIST, when He returned to the  
JERUSALEM, "gave some, Apostles; and some, Pro-  
phets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors  
and Teachers," &c.<sup>b</sup>: for "there are diversities of  
gifts, but the same SPIRIT<sup>c</sup>." And take notice,  
that as we are elsewhere reminded that "all these  
things doth that one and the selfsame SPIRIT, divid-  
ing unto every man severally *as He will*<sup>d</sup>," so are  
we here assured that to every man He giveth "*ac-  
cording to his several ability.*" Every one there-  
fore is entrusted with as many advantages, as  
any of God's gifts, as he is able to bear; and  
in this Parable we have learnt to call one class  
those gifts by the very name of '*Talents.*'  
The contrast between the present Parable and  
that of 'the Pounds' begins immediately to strike  
the eye, for, in the other, the sum entrusted to each  
servant was one and the same.

Then he that had received the five talents 16

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xix. 12 to 27.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. iv. 11.

1 Cor. xii. 4.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 11.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke xix. 13.

went and traded with the same, and made  
 17 *them* other five talents. And likewise he  
 that *had received* two, he also gained other  
 two.

Surely, the calling of the Merchant and the Banker hath been ennobled by the use to which the LORD of Heaven and Earth applies it!

The contrast already noticed continues to strike us. Instead of the *same* sum multiplied in *different* proportions, we are here presented with *different* sums which multiply in the *same* proportion. One of the servants in St. Luke's Parable, who had a pound entrusted to him, comes before his Lord, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds;' and another, who had been entrusted with the same sum, announces a gain of 'five.' But here, the gain is in exact proportion to the sum entrusted: the five talents have grown into 'other five;' and the two, into two more. Thus, while St. Luke's Parable reminds us that in spiritual matters, as in temporal, splendid success may be the result of strenuous exertion and bold 'ventures of Faith,' St. Matthew's sets forth the equally important truth, that to whomsoever God hath entrusted much of them He will require the more<sup>2</sup>. Three classes of men are exhibited by the Parable of 'the Pounds<sup>a</sup>:' only two by the Parable of 'the Talents.'

18 But he that had received one went and

<sup>a</sup> See St. Luke xii. 48.

<sup>2</sup> See the note on St. Luke xix. 19.

digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money.

How striking is the warning here conveyed; and which seems specially addressed to those censorious ones, who, lamenting their own limited opportunities, *neglect* them also! It is discovered that the servants who were entrusted with the ten talents and the five, fully availed themselves of *their* advantages. Not so 'he that had received *one*.' He alone it was who did nothing: but 'went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money!' . . . " '*His Lord's* money,' not his own; for it was their Lord's goods which were distributed among them<sup>b</sup>."

And yet, it may well be thought strange that the parable should run thus: for certainly every man's experience must rather suggest the belief that large opportunities are often misused or neglected; while an inferior stewardship is more commonly turned to excellent account. But does not the force of the warning perhaps consist in *this*,—namely, that *every* man, whatever may be his opportunities of serving God, is prone to look upon those opportunities as small, compared with those of others? to assume that *he* has been entrusted with only '*one Talent*'? The man of business persuades himself that want of leisure is what makes him unfruitful: he who is unfettered by business, on the contrary, attributes all his faults to his idleness. The man of fortune, be-

<sup>b</sup> Williams.

cause he finds that he moves among temptations, discourses of *virtuous poverty*; and is convinced that Virtue may be easily practised in a cottage. Surrounded by just as many temptations, (though of a wholly different kind,) the poor man reckons up all the miracles of goodness he would certainly perform, if he had but the means! . . . . . It ever hath been, it ever will be so.

- 19 After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.  
 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, Thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

The language is not the same which invites our attention in St. Luke xix. 16.

- 21 His Lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

He had been '*good*' as well as '*faithful*,'—shewing his *Faith* by his *Works*<sup>c</sup>: and great was his reward,—'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!' for, 'in *His* presence, there is the fulness of joy'<sup>d</sup>. "It is but little we can receive here," (says Leighton beautifully;) "some drops of Joy that enter

<sup>c</sup> St. James ii. 14 to 26.

<sup>d</sup> Ps. xvi. 11. Compare xxi. 6.

to *us*: but there, *we* shall enter into Joy,—as  
vessels put into a Sea of Happiness.”

He also that had received two talents 22  
came and said, Lord, Thou deliveredst unto  
me two talents: behold, I have gained two  
other talents beside them. His Lord said 23  
unto him, Well done, good and faithful ser-  
vant; thou hast been faithful over a few  
things, I will make thee ruler over many  
things: enter thou into the joy of thy  
Lord.

“In the joyful coming forward of the faithful  
servants, we see an example of ‘boldness in the  
day of Judgment.’ They had something to  
show.”

Then he which had received the one ta- 24  
lent came and said, Lord, I knew Thee that  
thou art an hard man, reaping where Thou  
hast not sown, and gathering where thou  
hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and 25  
went and hid Thy talent in the earth: lo,  
*ere* Thou hast *that is* Thine.

“If only he may roll off a charge from himself,  
he cares not for affixing one on his Lord.” The  
scurf regards his LORD as churlish also; “for  
every one’s thoughts of God are according to his

\* 1 St. John iv. 17.

Consider 1 Thess. ii. 19. Compare 2 Cor. i. 14, and Phil. v. 1.

own character. The just man apprehends His Justice; the merciful man, His Mercy; the pure in heart, His Holiness. But the wicked man judges of God according to his own wickedness<sup>a</sup>."

He has hard thoughts of Him, as if He were such an one as himself<sup>b</sup>; and "does not believe in His gracious acceptance of the work with all its faults, which was done with a sincere desire to please Him<sup>c</sup>."

- 26 His Lord answered and said unto him,  
*Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou  
 knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and  
 27 gather where I have not strawed: thou  
 oughtest therefore to have put my money  
 to the exchangers, and *then* at My coming  
 I should have received Mine own with  
 usury.

That is,—Thou knowest (sayest thou) that I am unfair in my dealings, and unreasonable in my expectations: shouldst thou not then have been the more scrupulous and painstaking? If thou wert incapable of undertaking any of those bolder ventures of Faith, which, for every hundred embarked, yield a hundred more,—wherefore didst thou not at least avail thyself of one of those ordinary methods of investment which yield *some* increase, however small? Tell me not of risk and insecurity. The principal sum, with its increase, I would have come and claimed, in person. The

<sup>a</sup> Williams.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. l. 21.

<sup>c</sup> Trench.

risk would have been all my own . . . Take notice that 'Usury' is the old word for 'Interest.'

"Those timid natures which are not suited to independent labour in the Kingdom of God are here counselled at least to attach themselves to other stronger characters, under whose leading they may lay out their gifts to the service of the Church<sup>k</sup>."

Take therefore the talent from him, and 28 give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.

For "the privileges and gifts of God are not lost, but transferred from him that has abused them to one more worthy : from Esau to Jacob, from Saul to David, from Judas Iscariot to St. Matthias, from Israel to the Gentiles<sup>l</sup>." "Hold fast that which thou hast," (saith the SPIRIT,) "that no man *take thy crown*<sup>m</sup>."

The striking resemblance of the five preceding verses to as many in the parable of 'the Pounds' in St. Luke's Gospel, will be found pointed out in a note on St. Luke xix. 24.

For unto every one that hath shall be 29 given, and he shall have abundance : but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

This saying will be found fully discussed in the Commentary on St. Mark iv. 25. See also on Matthew xiii. 12.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into 30

<sup>k</sup> Olshausen.

<sup>l</sup> Williams.

<sup>m</sup> Rev. iii. 11.



outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

What this expression denotes, may be discovered by a comparison of St. Matthew viii. 12, and xiii. 13<sup>a</sup>, with xiii. 42 and 50.

This then is the doom of 'the *unprofitable* servant;' whose sins were those of *omission*, not of *commission*. What severity of Judgment must therefore await the man who lustfully squanders the talent committed to his keeping; if 'outer darkness' is the punishment of him who slothfully buries it in the Earth<sup>o</sup>!

What, (once more), is the sum of the matter? "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching," &c. In fine, "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the LORD<sup>p</sup>."

Then follows a very remarkable passage, which ends the Chapter; and may be considered, in some sort, as the solemn Commentary of the SPIRIT on the two parables which precede.

31 When the Son of Man shall come in His Glory, and all the holy Angels with Him,

Alluding to the language of Zechariah xiv. 5. As He appeared on Sinai<sup>q</sup>, so will He appear at

<sup>a</sup> See the remarks on St. Matthew viii. 11 and 12.

<sup>o</sup> Augustine.    <sup>p</sup> Rom. xii. 6, 7, 11.    <sup>q</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 2.

the end of the world<sup>r</sup>. This is what is meant by  
 at 'coming *in the clouds*,' of which the prophet  
 aniel, our LORD Himself, and the beloved Dis-  
 ple speak<sup>s</sup>. "Those clouds," (says Bp. Pear-  
 son,) "were anciently expounded by the Jews of  
 the glorious attendance of the Angels waiting  
 upon the Son of Man<sup>t</sup>." When He cometh,—

then shall He sit upon the throne of His  
 glory : and before Him shall be gathered all 32  
 nations : and He shall separate them one  
 from another, as a shepherd divideth *his*  
 sheep from the goats : and He shall set the 33  
 sheep on His Right Hand, but the goats on  
 the Left.

The remark has been already made<sup>u</sup>, that under  
 such images, the Heavenly Husbandman delights  
 in discourse of His dealings with His people.  
 There seems to be a reference here to the lan-  
 guage of Ezekiel xxxiv. 17. Concerning 'the  
 right' as the place of Honour, see the note on  
 Mt. Luke i. 11.

Then shall the King say unto them on 34  
 His Right Hand, Come, ye blessed of My  
 FATHER, inherit the Kingdom prepared for

<sup>r</sup> See St. Matth. xvi. 27. 1 Thess. iii. 13, and 2 Thess. i. 7.  
 Also St. Jude 14.

<sup>s</sup> Dan. vii. 13, alluded to in St. Matth. xxiv. 30 and xxvi. 64;  
 Lev. i. 7.

<sup>t</sup> Consider the expression in Heb. xii. 1.

<sup>u</sup> See the note on St. Mark iii. 17.

you from the foundation of the World : for  
35 I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat : I  
was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink : I was a  
36 stranger, and ye took Me in : naked, and ye  
clothed Me : I was sick, and ye visited Me :  
I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.

Of all the Christian graces, the grace of Mercy is singled out in this striking manner, as if to be the type of all the rest : and the six Acts of Mercy thus specified *four times* in succession, are,—Feeding the Hungry, Giving Drink to the Thirsty, Receiving the Stranger, Clothing the Naked, Visiting the Sick, and Going after the Prisoners.

This enumeration of the actions on which the Decision of the Great and Terrible Day is described as depending, will be regarded as a very striking circumstance,—when it is considered that they are such acts as a heretic and unbeliever might practise. One reason why so much stress is laid upon them may be, that, (unlike martyrdom and acts of heroic virtue,) they are within the reach of all. “ And although a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet not have Charity ;” yet he can scarcely practise these works consistently, without Charity, or the Love of CHRIST : they are of themselves the best preparation of the heart to receive that love : and although persons may practise all these, and yet admit false doctrine from unavoidable ignorance, yet, if they practise them conscientiously, and as

CHRIST has commanded them to be done, they in-  
 ate such a love for the Truth that they will re-  
 ve it when it is brought before them.

Then shall the Righteous answer Him, 37  
 ying, LORD, when saw we Thee an hun-  
 ed, and fed *Thee*? or thirsty, and gave  
 ee drink? when saw we Thee a stranger, 38  
 d took *Thee* in? or naked, and clothed  
 ee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in pri- 39  
 n, and came unto Thee?

The surprise they are made to testify, expresses  
 a lively manner the feeling of wonder with which  
 the Righteous will hear their Divine Master's re-  
 gnition of their virtuous endeavours, 'in that  
 y.' See more below, in the note on verse 44.

And the King shall answer and say unto 40  
 em, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye  
 ve done *it* unto one of the least of these  
 y Brethren, ye have done *it* unto Me.

So entirely does our Great Head identify Him-  
 f with the very least of these His members\*!

Then shall He say also unto them on the 41

Consider Acts ix. 4. The same gracious assurance is met  
 in St. Matthew x. 40 : xviii. 5, St. Luke x. 16, St. John xiii.  
 and in St. Matthew x. 42, and St. Mark ix. 41, it is promised  
 the slightest acts of Mercy performed in time, shall in no wise  
 their reward throughout the ages of Eternity. "For God is  
 unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye  
 shewed towards His Name, in that ye have ministered to the  
 its, and do minister." Heb. vi. 9.

Left Hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels :

Note the contrast between what is said of 'Everlasting Fire,' in this verse, and what is stated in verse 34 concerning 'the Kingdom.' *That Kingdom* was prepared 'before the foundation of the World : ' not so, the pains of Hell. The misery of *any* of His creatures formed no part of God's *design* in Creation. But Man's Happiness, on the contrary, *was* designed from the beginning : 'inherit,' it is said, (that is, take as your right\*), 'the Kingdom *prepared for you from the foundation of the World.*' 'Everlasting Fire,' though it is the portion of the disobedient, was 'prepared' only '*for the Devil and his angels.*'

12 for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no  
meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no  
13 drink : I was a stranger, and ye took Me  
not in : naked, and ye clothed Me not :  
sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not.

Take notice, (for it is very striking,) what *was* the character of the heavy sin of those on the left : —not acts of cruelty, or deeds of lust : not disobedience, or dishonesty : not evil speaking, or covetousness : no great crime, in a word, or open vice. It consisted altogether in *omissions* and *neglects*. Lazarus had hungered, and they had

\* See St. Matth. v. 5, and the note there. Compare Rom. viii. 16, 17.

him no meat. Their 'lamps' had gone out.

had buried their 'Talent' in the Earth,—  
 and their 'Pound' in a napkin. They had led  
 a useless life. They were unprofitable Servants.

It is to be observed how, in this description  
 the LORD dwells expressly and minutely on each  
 particular by itself: He was hungry,—thirsty,—  
 naked,—sick,—and in prison. Per-  
 haps this implies that great particularity of the  
 judgment, which is elsewhere signified by the  
 prediction that 'even a cup of cold water given  
 for the sake of one of these little ones, shall not lose its reward'; and that  
 all shall bring every work into Judgment,  
 every secret thing, whether it be good or  
 whether it be evil; and that for every idle word,  
 men shall give account in the Day of Judgment.\*"

When shall they also answer Him, saying, 44  
 "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or  
 thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or  
 in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?"

The Righteous, in their answer<sup>b</sup>, dwelt on each  
 particular; in respect of each, finding themselves  
 failing. Whereas the unrighteous, in their reply,  
 overlooked all these neglected duties in a more  
 ordinary self-confident way<sup>c</sup>."

Self-confidence, indeed, constitutes a remark-  
 able feature in the character of all those whom

\* Matth. x. 42.      \* Eccles. xii. 14.      \* Williams,—  
 & St. Matth. xii. 36.      <sup>b</sup> See above, verses 37, 38, 39.  
 Williams.

GOD rejects. Samson, after his broken vow, says 'I will go out as at other times before . . . And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him<sup>d</sup>. 'Blessed be thou of the LORD,' says Saul to Samuel, after his act of disobedience: 'I have performed the commandment of the LORD<sup>e</sup>.' Gehazi, after his villainy, 'went in, and stood before his master<sup>f</sup>.' 'Have we not prophesied in Thy Name?' is the inquiry of them 'that work iniquity,' in the Sermon on the Mount<sup>g</sup>. The unprofitable servant in the Parable of 'the Pounds' comes forward without fear<sup>h</sup>. The Pharisee hesitates not to set himself above the Publican<sup>i</sup>. The guest unprovided with a wedding-garment, takes his place at the Supper without concern<sup>k</sup>. "On the contrary, they who are accepted of CHRIST, are full of misgiving, and scarce believe their own acceptance, in the greatness of their surprise and sense of unworthiness<sup>l</sup>."

45 Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to Me. And these shall go away into Everlasting punishment: but the righteous into Life Eternal.

Concerning the Eternity of future Rewards and Punishments, see the notes on St. Mark ix. 48.

<sup>d</sup> Judges xvi. 20.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 13.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Kings v. 25.

<sup>g</sup> St. Matth. vii. 22.

<sup>h</sup> St. Luke xix. 20.

<sup>i</sup> St. Luke xviii. 11.

<sup>k</sup> St. Matth. xxii. 11, 12.

<sup>l</sup> Williams

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 *The rulers conspire against CHRIST.* 6 *The woman anointeth His head.* 14 *Judas selleth Him.* 17 *CHRIST eateth the Passover:* 26 *instituteth His Holy Supper:* 36 *prayeth in the Garden:* 47 *and being betrayed with a kiss,* 57 *is carried to Caiaphas,* 69 *and denied of Peter.*

It will be remembered that the xxiv<sup>th</sup> chapter was occupied by our LORD's prophecy concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the World: the xxv<sup>th</sup>, by His Parables of 'the wise and foolish Virgins,' and of 'the Talents;' together with a picture of the Son of Man sitting upon the Throne of His Glory.' Our SAVIOUR who has hitherto been exhibited as our Great Prophet and Teacher, is now about to reveal Himself as our Great High Priest.

XXVI. AND it came to pass, when JESUS had finished all these sayings, He said unto His Disciples, Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the Passover*, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.

'Ye know,'—for He had forewarned them<sup>a</sup>. But by the form of His present address, He directs

<sup>a</sup> See St. Matth. xx. 17 to 19.



their attention to that fulfilment of the Law which was to take place in His person. St. Paul expresses this in three words,—‘CHRIST *our Passover*<sup>b</sup>’ . . . It is not needful in this place to enter into any account of the Paschal ceremony<sup>c</sup>: but it is right to observe how plain a type was the Paschal victim of ‘the LAMB of GOD, which taketh away the sin of the World<sup>d</sup>.’ Not only did the manner of roasting the Lamb represent the affixing of a man to the cross; but the very command concerning the Passover foretold the manner of CHRIST’S Death: for the direction not to ‘break a bone thereof<sup>e</sup>,’ having reference to Him, clearly implied that the SAVIOUR of the World should suffer that death to which the breaking of the bones belonged; and that, according to the constant custom in Judæa, was Crucifixion<sup>f</sup>.

The words of our LORD in ver. 2, are therefore none other than a great Prophecy;—where delivered, we know not; but most probably at Bethany, whither He certainly proceeded after the sayings with which the preceding chapter concluded. Take notice how the predictions which our SAVIOUR delivered concerning His own approaching Death and Passion increase in clearness as the event approaches<sup>g</sup>, until He actually

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.

<sup>c</sup> See Exod. xii. 1 to 27 and 43 to 49: Deut. xvi. 1 to 8.

<sup>d</sup> St. John i. 29.    <sup>e</sup> Exod. xii. 46.    <sup>f</sup> From Bp. Pearson.

<sup>g</sup> Examine the following texts: St. Matth. xvi. 21: xvii. 22, 23: St. Mark x. 33, 34,—where see the note.

ses *the very day* on which He is to suffer, and  
e *person* who is to betray Him<sup>h</sup>.

Then assembled together the chief Priests, 3  
and the Scribes, and the Elders of the peo-  
e, unto the palace of the High Priest, who  
as called Caiaphas, and consulted that they 4  
ight take JESUS by subtilty and kill *Him*.  
ut they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest 5  
ere be an uproar among the people.

Rather, 'Not in the Feast;' that is, during the  
ven days it lasted.—Thus did 'the rulers take  
unsel together, against the LORD, and against  
is Anointed<sup>l</sup>.' But their purpose was in part  
ustrated by the sudden proposal of Judas to  
liver his Master into their hands; whereby,  
ot only during the Feast, but on the great day  
' the Feast, in fulfilment of many an ancient  
pe and prophecy, our SAVIOUR suffered. The  
ouncil's dread of an outbreak of the populace  
minds us of the statement that 'the common  
eople heard Him gladly<sup>k</sup>,' and hung with delight  
nd attention on His words<sup>l</sup>; clearly shewing that  
e Holy One had 'much people' in Jerusalem<sup>m</sup>,  
ough they durst not confess Him.

Then follows a beautiful incident, (the Supper  
; Bethany,) which belongs however to an earlier  
ay,—and is accordingly referred to its actual

<sup>h</sup> See below, the note on ver. 21.

<sup>l</sup> Ps. ii. 2.

<sup>k</sup> St. Mark xii. 37. <sup>l</sup> St. Luke xix. 48. <sup>m</sup> Acts xviii. 10.

historical place by St. John in his Gospel<sup>a</sup>. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark, however, agree in relating the transaction here: and it is because they are about to describe the part which the Traitor took in the conspiracy of the chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders; and wish us to connect the treachery of Judas, (the account of which follows in verse 14,) with the covetous spirit he manifested when the ointment was poured on our SAVIOUR'S Head<sup>b</sup>. The reader is referred to the third paragraph of the note on St. Luke iii. 20.

6 Now when JESUS was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

That is, of Simon who *had been* a leper: for with a leprous person none might eat. How this man was related to Lazarus and his sisters,—or indeed, if he was related at all,—is not known.

7 there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat *at meat*.

Ignatius, first Bishop of Antioch, remarks that "the LORD received the myrrh upon His head in order to breathe into His Church incorruption."

8 But when His Disciples saw *it*, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose *is* this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

The chief speaker is found to have been Judas

<sup>a</sup> St. John xii. 1 to 8.

<sup>b</sup> See St. John xii. 4, 5.

Iscariot<sup>p</sup>. The 'Woman' was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, (who was one of the guests,) and of Martha, who waited upon her LORD as He sat at meat<sup>q</sup>.

When JESUS understood *it*, He said unto 10 them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For 11 ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath 12 poured this ointment on My Body, she did *it* for My burial. Verily I say unto you, 13 wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

These memorable words are found only in the two first Gospels, and their singular fulfilment has been noticed in every age of the Church. The Reader will find a few remarks on the foregoing incident in the Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel<sup>r</sup>; but he is chiefly referred to the notes on St. John.

"Then" (says St. Luke) "entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the Twelve<sup>s</sup>." It follows:

Then one of the Twelve, called Judas 14 Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and 15 said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they

<sup>p</sup> St. John xii. 4.

<sup>r</sup> St. Mark xiv. 3 to 9.

<sup>q</sup> St. John xii. 2.

<sup>s</sup> St. Luke xxii. 3.

covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

“I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price *thirty pieces of silver*†.” So had it been said five hundred years before! Judas leaves the chief Priests to name the price for which he shall betray the Holy One into their hands; and they set upon Him the price of a slave“. Thus the Traitor discovers that he has to do with persons covetous and vile as himself.

Consider how, not only in Prophecy but in Type also, this tremendous crime had been shadowed forth long before. Thus, when Joseph was sold by his brethren into Egypt, ‘Come,’ (another Judas had said,) ‘let us sell him.’ ‘And they lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver‡.’ The difference of the sum may have arisen out of the difference of the age of the victim in either case. Joseph was 17 years old when his brethren conspired against him. Now the Law in a certain place runs thus: ‘from *five even unto twenty years old*, thy estimation shall be of the male *twenty shekels*’.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

That is,—‘*in the absence of the multitude*‡.’ And

† Zech. xi. 12. See St. Matth. xxvii. 9, 10.

‡ Exod. xxi. 32.

§ Levit. xxvii. 5.

\* Gen. xxxvii. 26 to 28.

• St. Luke xxii. 6.

we lose sight of the Traitor, and his accursed enterprise, until he asks the question 'Is it I?' at the Paschal Supper<sup>a</sup>. What precedes took place on Wednesday in the week of our LORD'S Passion. The whole interval, until Thursday evening, seems to have been spent by our LORD and His Eleven Disciples, at Bethany, in deep retirement: nor is anything related concerning either Him or them throughout that period, except what is contained in the next three verses.

Now the first *day* of the *feast* of unleavened bread the Disciples came to JESUS, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?

For our LORD kept the Jewish feasts with religious punctuality. Rightly to understand this inquiry of the Disciples, it must be remembered that the preparation for eating the Passover was a work of labour, requiring no small exactness. Great care was taken to rid the apartment of every article of leaven, in pretended or supposed obedience to the Divine Command in Exod. xii. 15, 19, the spiritual intention of which St. Paul explains in a well known passage<sup>b</sup>;) moreover couches for the guests had to be prepared, the sundry articles required for the repast to be procured and cooked, and the chamber itself to be got in readiness. On the present occasion it is discovered from St. Mark's Gospel that 'a large upper room' furnished

<sup>a</sup> See below, ver. 25.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.

and prepared<sup>c</sup> was divinely provided ; and the two Disciples, (for it was St. Peter and St. John<sup>d</sup> who were charged with this blessed office,) had merely to get the Paschal Supper in readiness there.

- 18 And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand : I will keep the Pass-  
19 over at thy house with My Disciples. And the Disciples did as JESUS had appointed them ; and they made ready the Passover.

“The name of this blessed individual who had the honour to receive CHRIST into his house, on this the greatest of all occasions, (like that other favoured one whose colt the King of Heaven deigned to ride,) is not mentioned on Earth ; but we may well suppose that it is known and honoured in Heaven. CHRIST knows those that are His, and where they are to be found, and how<sup>e</sup>.” By reference to the two later Gospels, it will be seen that the Disciples were furnished with an exact account of what would befall them on entering the City<sup>f</sup>.

- 20 Now when the even was come, He sat down with the Twelve.

And to know what immediately followed, you must read St. Luke xxii. 15 to 18, and then St. John xiii. 2 to 20. Those words of Love and that act of Humiliation ended, the Paschal Supper

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark ~~xv.~~ 15.

<sup>d</sup> St. Mark xiv. 13 : St. Luke xxii. 8.

<sup>e</sup> Williams. The Reader may refer to the note on St. Mark xi. 3.

<sup>f</sup> See St. Mark xiv. 13 to 15 ; and St. Luke xxii. 10 to 12.

went on in the manner which the blessed Evangelist St. Matthew proceeds to describe.

And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say 21 unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.

He had often before predicted to His Apostles that He should be betrayed<sup>g</sup>. Now, for the first time, He declares that *one of themselves* shall prove the Traitor. "Then the Disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake<sup>h</sup>."

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and 22 began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?

How surprising is all this! It appears then that the Eleven, though they had companied with Judas for years, like brethren, knew nothing of his hidden blackness, to the very last. Did he then add consummate hypocrisy to all his other vices? Or are we not perhaps rather to behold in the scene before us an evidence of the simplicity and goodness of the Apostles; so full of that charity which 'thinketh no evil<sup>i</sup>,'—so unwilling to judge their neighbour<sup>k</sup>,—that they can more readily suspect and judge themselves? Nay, when our Lord whispers to Judas, and the Traitor rises to leave the table, his hand the while upon 'the bag;' so far from suspecting the devilish errand on which he is

<sup>g</sup> See St. Matth. xvii. 22: xx. 18: xxvi. 2. See above, on ver. 2, the last words of the note.

<sup>h</sup> St. John xiii. 22.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>k</sup> St. Matth. vii. 1, where see the note.



bent, they think that surely he has gone to buy something which they would have need of against the feast; or that he is gone to give something to the poor<sup>1</sup>! . . . . In the meantime, the Eleven Apostles are questioning to which of themselves their Divine Master may have alluded.

- 23 And He answered and said, He that dip-  
peth *his* hand with Me in the dish, the same  
24 shall betray Me. The Son of Man goeth as  
it is written of Him: but woe unto that man  
by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; it  
had been good for that man if he had not  
been born.

‘Fearful indeed, and tremendous words! enough to have arrested the Traitor, and to have shaken him to the depth of his inmost soul<sup>m</sup>.’ But few things strike us more forcibly in the course of this wondrous narrative than the hardening effect of sin persevered in. We probably miss the intended warning if we ascribe this terrible result specially to the sin of covetousness; though *that* appears indeed to have been the sin of Judas. *Every* form of sin has a deadening effect upon the heart. Judas repents not; though he is warned that the pit of Hell even now gapes for him. Nay, we read:

- 25 Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

<sup>1</sup> See St. John xiii. 29.

<sup>m</sup> Williams.

What can have moved the miserable man to ask the question? Was it perhaps the dread of detection, if he alone remained silent?

"And now, as it is ever the custom of God, when He takes anything from His elect, to restore it unto them in another form, and in infinite abundance; and as of that Paschal Supper, and the Cup of the Old Covenant, He was to drink no more; He proceeds to establish the New Covenant, which was no less than His own Body and Blood<sup>a</sup>." See more in the note on St. Mark xiv. 21.

And as they were eating, Jesus took 26 bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the Disciples,

He '*took Bread*,'—as all the Evangelists solemnly record°. He '*brake it*,' to set forth the breaking of His own Human Body; whence, according to St. Paul's account of this great transaction, besides '*This is My Body which is given for you<sup>p</sup>*,' He said '*This is My Body which is broken for you<sup>q</sup>*.' By breaking the Bread Himself, He shewed that it was by His own free will that He laid down His life<sup>r</sup>.

and said, Take, eat; this is My Body.

Mysterious words! the interpretation of which hath moved no small controversy in the Church of CHRIST. Let us rest content with that view of their meaning which the judgment of all

<sup>a</sup> Williams.

<sup>o</sup> See the end of the note on St. Luke ix. 16.

<sup>p</sup> St. Luke xxii. 19.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 24.

<sup>r</sup> St. John x. 18.

antiquity hath approved, and which the purest branches of the Church Catholic have faithfully retained. Our own Hooker has declared this view of the words 'This is My Body,' in the following terms:—"This hallowed food, through concurrence of Divine Power, is in verity and truth unto faithful receivers, instrumentally a cause of that mystical participation, whereby as I make myself wholly theirs, so I give them in hand an actual possession of all such saving grace as My sanctified Body can yield, and as their souls do presently need,—this is to them and in them, My Body." . . . "The Bread which we break," (asks the great Apostle,) "is it not the Communication of the Body of CHRIST?"

- 27 And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

"And" (St. Mark records,) "they all drank of it." "Strange, that any individual or any Church<sup>a</sup> should cut itself off from a privilege so exceeding great, casting aside thereby the arm of the Great Comforter! For as He had said, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you<sup>x</sup>;' so also to His Church He hath said, 'Drink ye all of it,'—'and they all drank of it<sup>y</sup>.'"

- 28 for this is My Blood of the New Testament,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

<sup>x</sup> St. Mark xiv. 23.

<sup>y</sup> As the Romish.

<sup>y</sup> St. John vi. 53.

<sup>y</sup> Williams.

Rather 'of the *New Covenant*:' and it is called 'the *New Covenant*,' (as the Prophet Jeremiah had named it long before<sup>a</sup>;) in allusion to that elder one concerning which Moses, after he had 'sprinkled both the book and all the people,' said 'This is the blood of the Testament' (or 'Covenant,') 'which God hath enjoined unto you<sup>a</sup>.' The *Old Covenant* had been made with 'the blood of goats and calves;' but the *New Covenant*, was to be ratified by 'the blood of CHRIST<sup>b</sup>.' And take notice that of the blood, anciently, none might drink on pain of death: but 'Drink ye all of *this*,' it is said.

which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

For 'without shedding of blood, is no Remission<sup>c</sup>.' But 'it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins<sup>d</sup>.' By this saying of our Blessed Lord it is therefore implied that what the Law was powerless to effect, would be achieved by His own most precious blood-shedding.

"The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communication of the Blood of CHRIST<sup>e</sup>?" The Body and Blood of CHRIST are thus "verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD's Supper." . . . "Let it therefore be sufficient for me, presenting myself at the LORD's Table, to

<sup>a</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31 to 34: along with which should be read the Apostle's reasoning in Hebr. viii. 8 to 13: x. 16 to 22.

<sup>a</sup> Exod. xxiv. 8, quoted in Heb. ix. 19, 20.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. ix. 12, 14. Consider Zech. ix. 11. <sup>c</sup> Heb. ix. 22.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. x. 4.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

know *what* I there receive from Him, without searching or inquiring of the manner *how* CHRIST performeth His promise: let disputes and questions, enemies to piety, abatements of true devotion, and hitherto in this cause but over-patiently heard,—let them take their rest; let curious and sharp-witted men beat their heads about what questions themselves will; the very letter of the words of CHRIST giveth plain security that these mysteries do as nails fasten us to His very Cross, that by them we draw out, as touching efficacy, force, and virtue, even the blood of His gored side; in the wounds of our REDEEMER we there dip our tongues; we are dyed red both within and without; our hunger is satisfied and our thirst for ever quenched; they are things wonderful which he feeleth, great which he seeth, and unheard of which he uttereth, whose soul is possessed of this Paschal LAMB, and made joyful in the strength of this new wine: this bread hath in it more than the substance which our eyes behold; this cup hallowed with solemn benediction availeth to the endless life and welfare both of soul and body, in that it serveth as well for a medicine to heal our infirmities and purge our sins, as for a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving; with touching it sanctifieth, it enlighteneth with belief, it truly conformeth us unto the image of JESUS CHRIST. What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not; it is enough that to me which take them they are the Body and Blood of CHRIST: His promise in witness hereof

sufficeth, His word He knoweth which way to accomplish. Why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful Communicant but this, O my God Thou art true, O my soul thou art happy<sup>f</sup>."

But I say unto you, I will not drink **29** henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My FATHER'S Kingdom.

Our Blessed LORD refers most likely to that mysterious Festival,—twice (as it seems) alluded to<sup>g</sup>, nowhere (probably) described,—of which He partook with His Disciples after His Resurrection. 'The Kingdom of God<sup>h</sup>,' or as St. Matthew says, 'of the FATHER,' had then *come*,—not indeed in all its fulness, but in all its essential outlines. There was then a new Creation: 'old things had passed away, behold, all things were become *new*<sup>i</sup>.' And "the whole World, which by the transgression of the first Adam was made subject to vanity, partook in the deliverance wrought by the second Adam. In this new state therefore, in this state of liberty, whatever related to the Kingdom now given to the Son of Man, or to its blessed and sovereign LORD, might agreeably to the Scriptural use of the word be denominated '*New*.' So, at least, Wine might be called, if our gracious REDEEMER vouchsafed to partake of it, not for the refreshment of mortal nature, but for another and

<sup>f</sup> Hooker.

<sup>h</sup> St. Mark xiv. 25.

<sup>g</sup> Acts i. 4 and x. 41.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

a higher purpose ; to shew the reality of His precious Body, and the certainty of His triumph over Death and the Grave.”—The words are Churton’s.

- 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.

Rather, — ‘and when they had *hymned*,’ or ‘*sung* ;’ but whether one hymn, or many, is not expressly stated. Since, however, the Paschal Supper was commonly closed by the singing of certain known Psalms,—namely, from the cxv<sup>th</sup> to the cxviii<sup>th</sup> inclusive, (the cxiii<sup>th</sup> and cxiv<sup>th</sup> having been sung in the course of the repast,)—it is reasonable to suppose that the same Psalms were sung at the present Festivity, and that allusion is made to the established usage of the nation.... Take notice that after partaking of the LORD’S Supper, we, in like manner, say or sing ‘Glory be to God on High,’ &c.—The blessed Company, (eleven Apostles and their LORD,) were now moving in the direction of the Mount of Olives, being lighted on their way by the full Paschal moon.

- 31 Then saith JESUS unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night : for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

In a chapter of the prophet Zechariah which abounds in mysterious allusions to the Passion of our Blessed SAVIOUR, it is written, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man

that is my fellow, saith the LORD of Hosts: *smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*<sup>1</sup>."

To this, the Good Shepherd here refers: adding,

But after I am risen again, I will go before 32  
you into Galilee.

Whereby He still speaks of Himself as a Shepherd, '*going before*' His sheep<sup>m</sup>. See St. John x. 4: and take notice that the Angel afterwards referred to these very words of CHRIST, when addressing the women at the Sepulchre<sup>n</sup>. Concerning this prophecy of one of our LORD's appearances, see the note on St. Matth. xxviii. 16.

Peter answered and said unto Him, 33  
Though all *men* shall be offended because of Thee, *yet* will I never be offended. JESUS 34  
said unto Him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.

St. Peter had said that he would never be '*offended*' because of CHRIST: his LORD foretels that he will, on the contrary, deny even that he *knew* Him; and this, not once, but three times. — '*Never* will I be offended,' St. Peter had said. But our SAVIOUR declares that the fall of His servant would take place on that very night, before the second cock-crow<sup>o</sup>.—His words imply a presumptuous confidence in himself beyond all the

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xiii. 7. See also verses 1 and 6.

<sup>m</sup> Consider St. Mark x. 32.

<sup>n</sup> See St. Matth. xxviii. 7.

<sup>o</sup> Compare St. Mark xiv. 30.



rest. His LORD tells him that while *all* will be *scattered*, *he* will be the one even to *deny*.

- 15 Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the Disciples.

Rather 'Though it were required that I should die with Thee.' . . . The Blessed Company were now well advanced on their way,—for the xv<sup>th</sup>, xvi<sup>th</sup>, and xvii<sup>th</sup> chapters of St. John's Gospel belong to this interval. They had left the city-gate, and had crossed or were crossing the brook Cedron, —the same which David, our LORD's great type and ancestor after the flesh, had crossed in sorrow one thousand years before<sup>a</sup>!

- 16 Then cometh JESUS with them unto a place called Gethsemane,

"Where was a Garden, into the which He entered, and His Disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for JESUS oftentimes resorted thither with His Disciples'." CHRIST repaired therefore to the accustomed spot,

- and saith unto the Disciples, Sit ye here,  
37 while I go and pray yonder. And he took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

With St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, ('the choice ones of the chosen,' as one of the Fathers speaks<sup>a</sup>;) the SAVIOUR withdrew to a remoter part

<sup>a</sup> 2 Sam. xv. 23. <sup>r</sup> St. John xviii. 1, 2. <sup>s</sup> Clement of Alexandria.

of the Garden. These, who had once been the select witnesses of His Almighty Power<sup>†</sup>, and once, of His greatest Glory<sup>‡</sup>, are now chosen to be the witnesses of His lowest Humiliation. Concerning 'the anguish of His soul,' here noticed, more will be found in the notes on St. Mark xiv. 34 and St. Luke xxii. 44.

Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me.

In the pains of the Body, (says Bp. Andrewes,) some sorrow like unto His might peradventure be found: "in the sorrow of the Soul, I am sure none. And indeed, the pain of the body is but the body of pain: the very soul of sorrow and pain is the soul's pain and sorrow."

Our REDEEMER here addresses the three Disciples in words which must have recalled to their memories two remarkable places in the Book of Psalms<sup>‡</sup>. Lest they should not fully apprehend the excess of His sorrow, He adds 'even unto Death:' as if, (says Bp. Pearson) the pangs of Death already encompassed Him, and as the Psalmist speaks, the pains of Hell had got hold upon Him. But how mysterious was His request that they would '*watch* with Him!' Very Man, He leans upon the Men He loved; and looks to them in His hour of Agony, for support and kindness.

<sup>†</sup> St. Mark v. 36 to 43.

<sup>‡</sup> St. Matth. xvii. 1 to 9.

<sup>‡</sup> The places referred to are Ps. xlii. 5 and cxvi. 3.

- 9 And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou *wilt*.

This was done, as St. Paul records, ‘with a strong cry, and tears.’ “And there appeared an Angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” This awful and most mysterious portion of His sufferings ended, the Holy One ‘rose up from prayer,’—

- 10 And He cometh unto the Disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one  
1 hour? watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

- 2 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My FATHER, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.

A moment since, we heard Him exhorting His Apostles to pray,—‘Lead us not into Temptation;’ as St. Polycarp remarks in his Epistle to the Philippians. Another petition of the LORD’S Prayer is already found on His own Divine lips. It is not of course implied that His own ‘will’ was at vari-

’ Heb. v. 7.     • St. Luke xxii. 43, 44: where see the notes.

unce with that of His FATHER: but the Son of Man had a *human will*; and the practice of high Virtue in Him was by no means unattended with difficulty, even by reason of the opposition of the strongest, and at the same time the most innocent instincts of Humanity<sup>a</sup>.

And He came and found them asleep 43 again: for their eyes were heavy.

Thrice He came to them; seeking consolation for Himself, safety for *them*. But they slept; and St. Luke says that it was 'for sorrow<sup>b</sup>.' The same three Disciples slept also on the Mount of Transfiguration; and how is it possible to read such things, and not to connect them with our LORD's prophetic intimations of what will be hereafter<sup>c</sup>?

And He left them, and went away again, 44 and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh He to His Disciples, 45 and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The meaning seems to be that 'Henceforth,' or 'Hereafter,' the Apostles might sleep and take rest if they would: but that the hour for which He had so long been preparing them had now arrived. Wherefore our LORD adds,

<sup>a</sup> The hint is from Dr. W. H. Mill.

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke xxii. 45.

<sup>c</sup> See St. Matth. xxv. 5, 6, &c.

46 Rise, let us be going : behold, he is at  
 47 hand that doth betray Me. And while He  
 yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the Twelve,  
 came, and with him a great multitude with  
 swords and staves, from the chief Priests  
 and Elders of the people.

All the three Evangelists, both when they describe the intended and also the actual betrayal of our SAVIOUR by Judas, mention him as '*one of the Twelve*<sup>d</sup>.' an expressive way of denoting the exceeding greatness of his crime,—on which they yet make no comment whatsoever. Take notice that along with the multitude, came the '*chief priests, and captains of the Temple, and elders*' in person<sup>e</sup>.

48 Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He : hold Him fast.

"And lead Him away safely,"—it is added in St. Mark's Gospel ; where see the note <sup>f</sup>. Was this not he of whom it had been said,—'*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, having war in his heart*'<sup>g</sup>? It is indeed greatly to be observed, (says one,) how much there is in the Psalms respecting Judas, throughout.

49 And forthwith he came to JESUS, and said, Hail, Master ; and kissed Him.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matth. xxvi. 14 : St. Mark xiv. 10 and 43 : St. Luke xxii. 3 and 47. See also St. John vi. 71.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke xxii. 52. <sup>f</sup> On St. Mark xiv. 44. <sup>g</sup> Ps. lv. 21.

It seems to be implied that he gave his Divine Master a kiss of earnest affection <sup>b</sup>. "The signal agreed upon" (remarks the excellent Writer last quoted) "is much to be noticed on the present occasion, as indicating the very affectionate and friendly footing on which our LORD was wont to receive this wicked man; and is of the same character as that of His eating at Supper out of the same dish with him, and washing his feet on this very night. Such tokens of love and gentleness, habitually afforded to so evil a man, can only be equalled by that forbearance and goodness which the same Divine Master ever shews in His natural Providence; whereby He makes His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and continues to benefit the unthankful <sup>i</sup>."

And JESUS said unto Him, Friend, where- 50  
fore art thou come? Then came they, and  
laid hands on JESUS, and took Him.

'Friend!' It was thus that the Householder remonstrated with the servant who murmured at his liberality; and thus that the King bespoke the guest that had not on a wedding garment <sup>j</sup>. No where else in the Gospel do we meet with this mode of address.—The next words are not words of inquiry, but of remonstrance. Well did our Divine LORD know 'wherefore Judas had come <sup>k</sup>!'

<sup>b</sup> The word recurs in St. Luke vii. 45: xv. 20. Acts xx. 37.

<sup>i</sup> Williams.

<sup>j</sup> St. Matth. xx. 13: xxii. 12.

<sup>k</sup> Compare St. Luke xxii. 48.

- 51 And, behold, one of them which were with JESUS stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high Priest's, and smote off his ear.

St. Peter had doubtless aimed at the man's head, and narrowly failed of effecting his purpose. "JESUS answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him<sup>1</sup>." St. Luke (the Physician) alone it is, who records this miraculous act of healing: while St. John adds, 'the servant's name was Malchus<sup>m</sup>.'

- 52 Then said JESUS unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.
- 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My FATHER, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of Angels?

'Twelve,' because that was the number of His weak unarmed Apostles. How does this allusion to the powers of the unseen World kindle the fancy: at once reminding us of the surpassing honour to which *one* of the Angelic order had already been appointed<sup>n</sup>; and suggesting the ardour with which the rest of that amazed and adoring Body must have longed to rush forth to avenge the cause of their Creator and their God!

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxii. 51.

<sup>m</sup> St. John xviii. 10.

<sup>n</sup> St. Luke xxii. 43.

By our SAVIOUR's allusion to the chief division of the Roman army, it seems to be hinted that the bright ranks of the Heavenly Host have discipline and order, courage and strength, subordination of offices, union under a common Leader, and whatever else appertains to a large and well-disciplined Army. See the note on St. Luke viii. 30; and consider Daniel vii. 20, and 2 Kings vi. 17.

But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said JESUS to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple, and ye laid no hold on Me.

Day by day, throughout the previous week, as we have seen, our LORD had taught openly in the Temple. Why then had they come upon Him thus by Night? Again, His only attendants were a few unarmed followers. Why then had they come out with swords and staves, as if against some desperate robber?—The Evangelist remarks,

But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the Disciples forsook Him, and fled. And they that had laid hold on JESUS led Him away to Caiaphas the high Priest, where the Scribes and the Elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high



Priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

All this is given far more particularly in St. John's Gospel,—to which the Reader is referred<sup>¶</sup>.

59 Now the chief Priests, and Elders, and all the council, sought false witness against  
60 JESUS, to put Him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.

That is, 'none' by whose evidence they might persuade Pilate '*to put Him to death.*'

At the last came two false witnesses,  
61 and said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.

How striking it is, at the close of our Blessed LORD's Ministry, to be thus reminded of a saying which came before us at the commencement of it, and which we had begun, as it were, to lose sight of! The occasion when the words were spoken, to which these wicked men allude, will be seen in the second Chapter of St. John's Gospel;—where, in answer to the demand for 'a sign,' our LORD foretells His Death and Resurrection, saying 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up'.<sup>¶</sup>

Not far removed from the Truth, it will be seen, was the statement of the witnesses, (they

<sup>¶</sup> See St. John xviii. 15 to 18.

<sup>¶</sup> St. John ii. 19, where see the note.

were of necessity *two*\*) whom nevertheless St. Matthew and St. Mark concur in calling '*false witnesses*.' Wherein then consisted their falsity? It consisted in their ascribing to our SAVIOUR *the intention*<sup>†</sup> of *destroying* and then rebuilding the Temple,—'this Temple that is made with hands,' as St. Mark expresses it. What He had said, was, '*destroy ye*, and I will raise up:' by charging Him with the vaunt of power over the material shrine, and with the intention of making a display of that power, they had entirely altered the character of His words.—But even so, their witness did not agree, as St. Mark declares<sup>‡</sup>; whereupon Caiaphas lost patience:

And the high Priest arose, and said unto 62 Him, Answerest Thou nothing? what *is it* which these witness against Thee? But 63 Jesus held His peace. And the high Priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the CHRIST, the SON of God.

The witness who kept silence after such an adjuration, the Law pronounced guilty<sup>x</sup>. Accordingly our SAVIOUR, who until now 'as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened not He His mouth<sup>y</sup>,'—hereupon makes answer; shewing thereby His reverence for the Law, and for the

\* See Deut. xvii. 6 : xix. 15.

‡ St. Mark xiv. 59.

† Is. liii. 7 : quoted in Acts viii. 32.

† See St. Mark xiv. 58.

‡ Levit. v. 1.

sacred office of the wicked man who addressed Him. See the note on St. Matthew xxvii. 12.

- 64 JESUS saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.

Rather, 'Moreover,' or 'What is more, I say unto you,' &c. . . . "CHRIST is said to sit down at the *Right Hand* of the FATHER, in regard of that absolute power and dominion which He hath obtained in Heaven<sup>a</sup>."

Concerning this wondrous prophecy, the Reader is referred to what has been already offered in the notes on St. Matthew xxiv. 30? — The conduct of the High Priest on hearing these words, (which the Evangelist proceeds to describe), shews clearly enough that he entirely understood our SAVIOUR's allusion to a famous passage in the Book of Daniel<sup>a</sup>; as well as His implied claim to be that Son of Man described by the Prophet, and whom the Jews interpreted as the MESSIAH.

- 65 Then the high Priest rent his clothes,

This was done to aggravate our LORD's offence, and to add weight to his own words of condemnation<sup>b</sup>. Hypocritically indeed, was it done; "but it is awful to think that God fulfils in earnest

<sup>a</sup> Bp. Pearson. See Ps. cx. 1, and Acts vii. 55, 56.

<sup>a</sup> Dan. vii. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Chrysostom.

what men do against Him in mockery. Thus the High Priest rent his clothes for a light purpose, but God rent them for him in very deed and truth: they arrayed CHRIST in royal robes, and a crown, and a sceptre, and proclaimed Him King of the Jews in derision; but God made Him all these in a Divine reality, and in a manner infinitely substantial. As Caiaphas prophesied, though he knew it not; and the false witnesses, though they knew it not, in lying spake truth; so now the High Priest in rending his garments, acted a real and deep tragedy for himself, for he thus declared that the order of Levi, the Jewish Priesthood, was rent, and already no more<sup>c</sup>."

saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What 66 think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

"O amazing and stupendous extent of man's guilt and blind folly," (remarks the same writer,) "that he should come to this! But from greatest evil comes, by God's mercy, greatest good to His distressed creatures: they condemned Him to be guilty of death, but the condemnation of Him who was guiltless hath released us, who were worthy of death, from condemnation."

Then did they spit in His face, and buf- 67

<sup>c</sup> Williams. Consider 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28, and 1 Kings xi. 30, 31.

feted Him ; and others smote *Him* with the palms of their hands,

So literally were the words of the Prophet fulfilled,—“I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and *spitting* <sup>d</sup>.” To this monstrous indignity, (the spitting,) which was afterwards repeated<sup>e</sup>, it will be observed that both St. Matthew and St. Mark assign the foremost rank<sup>f</sup>; as indeed it is found to occupy a distinct place in our SAVIOUR’S own predictions of His approaching humiliation<sup>g</sup>. To request the Reader’s reference to Isaiah liii. 3 to 6, in illustration of such a text as the present, seems obvious.—These miscreants therefore, smote Him,—

68 saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou CHRIST, Who is he that smote Thee ?

The meaning of this act of wickedness is made plainer by St. Mark’s statement that ‘they covered His face<sup>h</sup>;’ but it is St. Luke who explains the matter fully, saying, ‘And *when they had blindfolded Him*, they struck Him on the face<sup>i</sup>,’ and gave Him the blasphemous challenge recorded in the text. For ‘to prophesy’ is not only to foretell future events; but to declare miraculously whatever cannot naturally be discovered. Thus Moses ‘prophesied’ when he described the Creation, and

<sup>d</sup> Is. l. 6.      • St. Matth. xxvii. 30.      <sup>f</sup> See St. Mark xiv. 65.

<sup>e</sup> See St. Mark x. 34 and St. Luke xviii. 32.

<sup>h</sup> St. Mark xiv. 65.

<sup>i</sup> St. Luke xxii. 64.

3 Fall of Man, no less than when He foretold  
3 Captivity, and the Siege of Jerusalem<sup>k</sup>.

The three denials of St. Peter follow; which  
ll be found more fully commented on in the  
tes on St. Mark's Gospel<sup>l</sup>.

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and 69  
damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also  
ast with JESUS of Galilee. But he denied 70  
efore *them* all, saying, I know not what  
ou sayest. And when he was gone out 71  
nto the porch, another *maid* saw him, and  
aid unto them that were there, This *fellow*  
as also with JESUS of Nazareth. And again 72  
e denied with an oath, I do not know the  
an. And after a while came unto *him* they 73  
hat stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou  
lso art *one* of them; for thy speech bewray-  
th thee.

Or, as it is expressed in St. Mark's Gospel, "for  
hou art *a Galilæan*, and thy speech agreeth  
hereto<sup>m</sup>." See the note on the place.

Then began he to curse and to swear, *say-* 74  
*ng*, I know not the man.

Take notice how he who at first (in ver. 70), had  
imply denied his LORD,—and (in ver. 72) had  
enied Him 'with an oath,'—now at last begins

<sup>k</sup> Deut. xxviii. 32 to 38 and 49 to 68.

<sup>l</sup> St. Mark xiv. 66 to 72.

<sup>m</sup> St. Mark xiv. 70.

‘to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man.’ So rapid is the growth of Sin !

And immediately the cock crew.

“And the LORD turned, and looked upon Peter:”

- 75 And Peter remembered the word of JESUS, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

“We have so often deeply wounded ourselves with medicines,” (says Hooker,) “that God hath been fain to make wounds medicinal ; to cure by vice where virtue hath stricken ; to suffer the just man to fall, that, being raised, he may be taught what power it was which upheld him standing. I am not afraid to affirm it boldly, with Augustine, that men, puffed up through a proud opinion of their own sanctity and holiness, receive a benefit at the hands of God, and are assisted with His Grace when with His Grace they are not assisted, but permitted, and that grievously, to transgress ; whereby, as through over-great liking of themselves they fell, so the dislike of that which did work their fall may establish them afterwards the surer. Ask the very soul of Peter, and it shall undoubtedly make you itself this answer : My eager protestations, made in the glory of my ghostly strength, I am ashamed of ; but those crystal tears, wherewith my sin and weakness was bewailed, have procured my endless joy ; my strength hath been my ruin, and my fall my stay.”

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*1 CHRIST is delivered bound to Pilate. 8 Judas hangeth himself. 19 Pilate, admonished of his wife, 24 washeth his hands: 26 and looseth Barabbas. 29 CHRIST is crowned with thorns, 34 crucified, 40 reviled, 50 dieth, and is buried: 66 His sepulchre is sealed, and watched.*

THE former Chapter ended with an account of St. Peter's three denials of his LORD,—and of his repentance. The Holy One was in the meantime undergoing the mock solemnity of a trial at the hands of the wicked men who had already determined upon His Death. He had been hurried from the Garden of Gethsemane to the House of Annas,—thence to the Palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest<sup>a</sup>. The whole night long had been one continued scene of insult and cruelty. It was now the morning of Friday.

XXVII. WHEN the morning was come, all <sup>1</sup> the Chief Priests and Elders of the people took counsel against JESUS to put Him to death :

St. Luke alone describes the manner of their

<sup>a</sup> St. John xviii. 13, 24.



proceeding. See his Gospel <sup>b</sup>, for an account of what took place when the Holy One was brought before the high Court of Sanhedrin.

- 2 and when they had bound Him, they led *Him* away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

For they judged it expedient, on every account, to transfer to Pilate the execution of their own sentence. How the Roman Governor conducted himself towards the Holy Jesus, we shall be told in the 11<sup>th</sup> and following verses; in the meantime, it would appear as if Judas, terrified at the success of his own villainy, had been watching the progress of events with remorse and horror. The Council of 'Chief priests and Elders' had probably been held in the Temple. Accordingly, it is added :

- 3 Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty picces of silver to the Chief Priests and  
4 Elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.

" In the Temple he makes his Confession, and offers restitution; but they in the Temple, who ought to receive the penitent, are the partners of his guilt. It is the voice of the children of Cain

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke xxii. 66 to 71.

which answers 'What is that to us?' 'Am I my brother's keeper<sup>c</sup>?' Very striking and fearful is the picture contained in the words which follow :

And he cast down the pieces of silver in <sup>5</sup> the Temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Thus does Judas himself bear evidence to the innocence of Him, whose death he had been so carefully contriving. He is visited also with pangs of fruitless Repentance ; confesses his crime ; and after a miserable fashion seeks to make restitution : for when he dashed down the money on the floor of the Temple,—(which act of his, had not failed to arrest the keen glance of ancient Prophecy<sup>d</sup>),—he doubtless intended that it should be applied to some sacred use. But his was not that godly sorrow spoken of by the Apostle,—(sorrow like Simon Peter's,)—which "worketh Repentance to Salvation : . . . but the sorrow of the World," which "*worketh Death*." Judas 'went and hanged himself,' (as Ahithophel, David's 'companion' and 'own familiar friend<sup>e</sup>,' had done before him<sup>f</sup>;) whereupon, as St. Luke informs us, he fell forward upon his face, burst asunder, 'and all his bowels gushed out<sup>h</sup>.'

It seems impossible to reach the close of the history of this most miserable of men, without

<sup>c</sup> Williams, quoting Gen. iv. 9.

<sup>d</sup> See below, on ver. 10.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. lv. 14. See also Ps. xli. 9.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Sam. xvii. 23.

<sup>h</sup> Acts i. 18.

reflecting with awful interest on what had probably been his course of life. And it may be regarded as certain that the character of Judas, (from the blackness of which we have learnt to recoil with horror,) occupies far too small a share of men's attention. A few remarks on this subject have been already offered elsewhere<sup>1</sup>; and this is not the proper place to pursue such a train of thought. We may not here discuss the nature of his peculiar sin,—its rapid growth,—and its hardening tendencies. It shall but be remarked that *he* will do well and wisely who shall set himself to gather up the many hints which, from first to last, fell from our LORD's lips on the subject of Covetousness; and to which the crime of Judas at the close of the Gospel, supplies the obvious clue. Nor should the many warnings which the traitor continued to receive to the very last, escape our notice either; for they not only shew the long suffering patience and love of CHRIST, but they furnish a comfortable assurance that no one should be deemed irreclaimable so long as he liveth.

Some will be found to inquire, Might not even Judas have repented? Doubtless the door of Mercy is never closed against the true penitent: and the blood of CHRIST is powerful to cleanse from all sin. "But then," (as it has been truly remarked,) "it appears equally clear from the whole analogy of Scripture, that true Repentance becomes more and more difficult, according to the

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 22 and 24.

degrees of grace rejected; and after a certain point, impossible. Thus it may be observed that St. Paul never intimates that Repentance is in any case unavailable; or that the door of pardon is closed against those who are 'renewed unto repentance.' But he does say, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it is impossible 'to renew unto repentance' those who have grievously fallen away, after great privileges. So that if the words, 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool<sup>j</sup>,' describe the unbounded extent of God's mercies in the Gospel covenant; yet notwithstanding this, the state of probation under the Gospel is described in a certain sense by those other words, — 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil<sup>k</sup>:' and, 'he which is filthy, let him be filthy still<sup>l</sup>.' Numerous, in short, as are those expressions which describe the Mercy promised to Repentance, yet not less numerous are those which speak of Repentance becoming more and more difficult, and at length, impossible, after the rejection of Grace given<sup>m</sup>."

The end of this very wicked man, as recorded in ver. 5, must evidently be referred to a somewhat later moment. He may have even delayed adding the guilt of suicide to his other tremendous

<sup>j</sup> Isa. i. 18.

<sup>k</sup> Jer. xiii. 23.

<sup>l</sup> Rev. xxii. 11.

<sup>m</sup> Williams.

crimes, until he had witnessed the final issue of his machinations against his Divine Master. But the incident which the Evangelist proceeds next to record certainly belongs to a much later period:

- 6 And the Chief Priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the Treasury, because it is the price of blood.

Take notice of their miserable inconsistency and superstition. How often are religious scruples thus found to dwell with men who have sold themselves to work all manner of iniquity! The Treasury had probably furnished the very pieces of silver which it is now deemed so sinful to replace there.

- 7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.  
8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Thus does God overrule man's wickedness to his shame. Had these evil persons simply replaced the silver pieces, their crime would hardly have transpired: but by taking counsel, and buying a field with the money, their crime obtains many witnesses, besides a public monument.

The narrative is full of wonder and interest at every step. These wicked men thought that the Gentile strangers who happened to die at Jerusalem would be fitly provided for, if the price of a

criminal's blood were bestowed in the purchase of a field wherein to bury them. But that criminal was CHRIST,—the SAVIOUR of the Gentiles: so that, (as in the case of Abraham of old,) *a burial-place*, (and *that*, bought with CHRIST's blood,) became the first possession of the Gentile Church; and it was theirs, at a time when God gave them none inheritance in the Land, no, not so much as to set their foot on; though He had promised that He would give them the whole Earth for a possession<sup>a</sup>.

The transaction here recorded, is noticed in a very remarkable manner in the Acts. Judas is there represented as *purchasing* the field with the reward of iniquity: *the dead man* is spoken of as the agent; and the money he had returned, is declared with terrible signifiçancy to have remained *still* his<sup>o</sup>.

A pious writer remarks, — “The price of CHRIST's blood was not to enrich the Temple of the Jews, but to supply a resting place for the Gentiles; to receive their bodies till the general Resurrection. St. Jerome, who had been at the place, mentions that they shewed this field in his time: that it lay to the south of Mount Sion; and that they buried there the poorest and meanest of the people<sup>p</sup>.” The spot is said to be clearly distinguishable to the present day.

<sup>a</sup> Consider Gen. xxiii. Acts vii. 5.

<sup>o</sup> Acts i. 18, 19,—which, (take notice,) are St. Luke's words; not St. Peter's.

<sup>p</sup> Williams.

9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD appointed me.

The words are found to stand thus in the Old Testament: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the House of the LORD<sup>1</sup>." With such wonderful distinctness and precision was the sin of Judas described, five hundred years and upwards before it was actually committed! The difficulty occasioned by this statement of the Evangelist is well known: for it is *Zechariah*, not 'Jeremy the prophet,' who delivers the prophecy under consideration. It is hard to see, however, where the supposed difficulty exists; if it be but believed that the same Spirit who inspired God's ancient Prophets guided His Evangelists likewise. St. Matthew does but inform us that this prophecy of Zechariah had been delivered by Jeremiah, about one hundred years before: and the information, however it may kindle gratitude, need ex-

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xi. 12, 13.

cite no surprise. First, because many words must have been spoken by holy men of old as the Spirit gave them utterance, which were never committed to writing<sup>r</sup>: next, because the later prophets often repeat the prophecies of those who went before them<sup>s</sup>; and lastly, because Zechariah is found to have spoken many things which recal the language of Jeremiah's prophecies<sup>t</sup>. It is not, of course, denied that something of divine mystery attaches to the prophecy in question, which has never been explained: but there is no room for captious cavil concerning the words of the Evangelist.

Our attention is invited however to something of a widely different character. The Jewish Rulers having conducted our SAVIOUR before Pilate, (as recorded in ver. 2), bring against Him an accusation which they know will arouse the attention and excite the jealousy of the Roman Governor. "They began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is CHRIST a King<sup>u</sup>." Pilate accordingly asks a question, which all the four Evangelists agree in relating in the self-same words.

And JESUS stood before the governor: 11  
and the governor asked Him, saying, Art

<sup>r</sup> For instance St. Jude, verses 14, 15.

<sup>s</sup> Thus Is. xi. 9 is repeated in Hab. ii. 14: Mic. iii. 12 in Jer. xxvi. 18: &c. &c.

<sup>t</sup> Thus Zech. i. 4 recals Jer. xviii. 11, and xxxv. 15. Zech. iii. 8 recals Jer. xxiii. 5.

<sup>u</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 2.



Thou the King of the Jews ? and JESUS said unto him, Thou sayest.

This is that 'good Confession' of which St. Paul reminded Timothy long after, as witnessed by CHRIST JESUS before Pontius Pilate\*. The echo of the appellation thus claimed for Himself by our SAVIOUR will be found never to die away throughout the judicial proceedings which follow, until Pilate deliberately affixes it, as a title, to the Cross.

12 And when He was accused of the Chief Priests and Elders, He answered nothing.

To the false accusations brought against our Blessed LORD, 'He answered nothing': but when Pilate, in ver. 11, asked Him whether He were a King, He answered at once ; just as in the former Chapter, He is found to have answered the question of the High Priest, whether He were the CHRIST, the SON of God ?

13 Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against  
14 Thee ? And He answered him to never a word ; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

"It is evident," (says Origen,) "that Pilate was kindly disposed towards CHRIST, but yet he had no settled judgment, and was wavering."

\* 1 Tim. vi. 13.

† See also St. Matth. xxvi. 63, and the note there.

‡ St. Matth. xxvi. 63, 64.

“ He marvelled, that being a Teacher of the Law, powerful and eloquent, our Blessed LORD did not by His answers refute the charges brought against Him, but rather, calmly sustained them <sup>a</sup>. ” “ We may also suppose that there was something in His manner and words, so different from what is usual in a criminal, that the Judge felt something of awe and wonder before Him <sup>b</sup>. ” . . . To know what followed, the Reader must refer to chap. xxiii. of St. Luke's Gospel, and read from ver. 4 to ver. 16.

Now at *that* feast the governor was wont <sup>15</sup> to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable <sup>16</sup> prisoner, called Barabbas.

Concerning whom, St. Mark supplies in this place some particulars <sup>c</sup>. The custom alluded to in ver. 15 was probably of recent date, and of Roman origin; but it had evidently become absolute <sup>d</sup>. St. Mark adds that the populace with loud cries demanded of Pilate that ‘ he would do as he had ever done unto them. ’

Therefore when they were gathered to- <sup>17</sup> gether, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or JESUS which is called CHRIST? For he knew <sup>18</sup> that for envy they had delivered Him.

Even so the Patriarchs, ‘ moved with *envy*, ’ de-

<sup>a</sup> Theophylact.

<sup>b</sup> Williams.

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark xv. 7.

<sup>d</sup> See St. Luke xxiii. 17. Also St. Mark xv. 6, 8.

livered Joseph, (an eminent type of CHRIST,) into the hands of his enemies\*.

- 19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his Wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.

This remarkable incident is related only by St. Matthew. Judas, Herod Antipas, and Pilate, exhibit three remarkable types of Sin in the New Testament; and it is very striking to observe how many recorded *warnings* they obtained in the course of their downward career. Pilate receives a warning even from his own wife!

- 20 But the Chief Priests and Elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask  
21 Barabbas, and destroy JESUS. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?  
22 They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with JESUS which is called CHRIST? *They* all say unto him, Let  
23 Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified.

- 24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail

\* See Acts vii. 9, referring to Gen. xxxvii. 28.

nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye *to it*.

Pilate is the very type of the weak, wavering, temporising statesman : quick to see the right course,—yet afraid to pursue it : striving, if possible, to reconcile supposed interest with certain duty ; and in the end, making a miserable sacrifice of both. The ceremony which he is here described as performing, was well understood by the Jewish nation<sup>f</sup> ; but it was probably common to other nations besides, as expressive of innocence.

Pilate testifies extraordinary anxiety to remove from himself the guilt of being accessory to our SAVIOUR's murder : yet has the Church in her Creed, from the very earliest time, linked the Crucifixion of CHRIST with *his* name only : “crucified—*under Pontius Pilate*.”

Then answered all the people, and said, 25 His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

Thus fulfilling the sentence of the Psalmist,—  
‘Let the mischief of their own lips fall upon the head of them that compass Me about<sup>g</sup>.’ . . . .  
The notes on our LORD's prophecy of the Destruction of Jerusalem may convey some notion of the tremendous curse which these terrible words entailed upon its sinful inhabitants<sup>h</sup>. Jose-

<sup>f</sup> Deut. xxi. 6 to 8.    <sup>g</sup> Ps. cxl. 9.    <sup>h</sup> See St. Matth. xxiv.

phus relates that so many were crucified at the time of the siege, that 'room was wanted for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies.' The Jews became from that day forward a despised and scattered, a persecuted and degraded race,—a reproach among all the nations of the Earth.

- 26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged JESUS, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

This monstrous outrage meets with a special notice in the prophetic outline which our LORD Himself so often drew of His approaching Humiliation<sup>i</sup>. It is also solemnly described by the Evangelical Prophet; "He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed<sup>j</sup>." A pious writer conceives that *this* is that bloody baptism which the SAVIOUR declared was in store for Himself<sup>k</sup>. The exceeding cruelty of the terrible infliction alluded to, is surely obvious to any who will attend to the sacred narrative. The robing and unrobing which followed, must have materially aggravated the suffering; while the perfection of His sinless Humanity may well be thought to have sharpened every pain, and rendered the torture in fact intolerable.

<sup>i</sup> St. Matth. xx. 19.

<sup>j</sup> Is. liii. 5: quoted in 1 St. Peter ii. 24.

<sup>k</sup> St. Luke xii. 50.

Then the soldiers of the governor took 27 JESUS into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band *of soldiers*.

In the original, what is here called 'the Common-Hall,' 'the Judgment-Hall<sup>1</sup>,' and 'the Governor's House<sup>m</sup>,' is simply 'the Prætorium.'

And they stripped Him, and put on Him 28 a scarlet robe: and when they had platted a 29 crown of thorns, they put *it* upon His head,

"The perpetrators of this action designed by it nothing beyond the gratification of their wanton cruelty. But when we call to mind that the Second Adam was at this very time submitting Himself to the curse of God,—and couple with this the recorded fact that the thorn and the thistle were the fruits of that curse, as it took effect upon the ground,—we cannot resist the inference that the cruel device was overruled by God to the expression of a truth which He would have us discern and ponder. Being the immediate produce of the curse, the thorn was an appropriate decoration for the Man of the curse. But more than this. The endurance of the Thorn was the endurance of Sin's penalty as it visited not the transgressor but the place of his residence. Now, the endurance of a penalty by CHRIST in His vicarious character, involves and must ultimately issue in the cancelling of the

<sup>1</sup> St. John xviii. 28, 33 : xix. 9.

<sup>m</sup> See the margin.

penalty. And accordingly the circumstance of our LORD's having worn and suffered from a Crown of Thorns would seem to intimate that a revocation of the sentence which was passed upon the soil<sup>a</sup> is in God's design,—a revocation which may possibly involve the fulfilment in a literal sense of the prediction, that '*instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree*.''' These miscreants then, put such a crown upon His Head;

and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

By such conduct, "in addition to what He had already undergone, inflicting excruciating agony as well as mockery, on His most sacred person: and thus was He, not in colour and appearance only, but in reality, 'with a vesture dipped in blood';' coming 'with dyed garments from Bozrah; and stained in all His raiment<sup>a</sup>.'"

10 And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the Head.

Concerning the disgusting outrage thus committed for the second time on the sacred person of our LORD, see the note on St. Matthew xxvi. 67.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. iii. 18.

<sup>o</sup> Goulburn, quoting Is. lv. 13. Consider, in connexion with the remark in the text, Gen. iii. 19 and St. Luke xxii. 44.

<sup>p</sup> Rev. xix. 13.      <sup>q</sup> Williams,—quoting Is. lxiii. 1 and 3.

“Thus was He crowned, and this was His Coronation Day. The Hall of Judgment was His Kingly Court, and these kneelers were His Courtiers. There was no part of His most adorable person but was marked with suffering and indignity. His head was bleeding with the Crown of thorns, and beaten with the reed: His Divine Countenance, from the brightness of which Angels hide their eyes in adoration, before which the Heavens are not clean, was defiled with spitting and bruised with blows: His back was mangled with the scourging of rude soldiers: His knees were already weak through fasting. And worse than the iron which held Him in chains, or which presently pierced His hands, were those words which, ‘like the piercings of a sword,’ enter the soul. For bodily inflictions we can in ordinary cases estimate, but not so the wounds of a righteous soul on beholding and hearing the deeds of the wicked.”

And after that they had mocked Him, <sup>31</sup> they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify *Him*.

“And He,” (the true Isaac,) “bearing His cross, went forth<sup>a</sup>.” This preliminary act of cruelty was the common punishment of malefactors: but so exhausted was our SAVIOUR with what He had already undergone, that on reach-

<sup>a</sup> Williams.

<sup>a</sup> St. John xix. 17.



ing the gate of the city, He could no longer endure the burden. It follows, therefore,

- 32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.

And thus attended, He took His painful way to Calvary, followed by "a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him<sup>1</sup>." Nor was this part of His Passion without a mystical intention: for as "the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp," "JESUS also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, *suffered without the gate.*" Such is the Commentary of the SPIRIT on this incident; and it is added, with reference to the very scene here depicted, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach<sup>2</sup>."

But who was the 'man of Cyrene' of whom we here read? "What good deed of faith had he done to CHRIST, or to CHRIST's little ones, that he, of all the sons of Adam, should have been deemed worthy to be admitted to this, the first and greatest of all earthly honours? Who he was, excepting by name, we know not; nor what he had done; for God withdraws from the sight of men, and hides in His own presence, those whom He most delights to honour<sup>3</sup>." See the note on St. Mark xv. 21.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 27, where see the note.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xiii. 11 to 13.

<sup>3</sup> Williams.

And when they were come unto a place 33  
called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of  
a skull,

A place 'nigh to the City'; which may be  
thought to have derived its name from the hideous  
tokens of mortality with which it abounded, as an  
ordinary scene of suffering. There,

they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled 34  
with gall: and when He had tasted *thereof*,  
He would not drink.

And they crucified Him.

35

At once the most painful, and the most ignominious of Roman punishments: and it was done, in order that He might 'redeem us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us'; for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree'. Not that suspension was one of the capital punishments prescribed by the Law of Moses; but such as they punished with death, were oftentimes after death exposed to the ignominy of the gibbet; and those who, being dead, were so hanged on a tree, were accursed by the Law. "Now though CHRIST was not to die by the sentence of the Jews, ... yet the Providence of God did so dispose it, that He might suffer that death which did contain in it the ignominy to which the legal curse belonged, which is, *the hanging on a tree*<sup>b</sup>."

<sup>7</sup> St. John xix. 20.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xxi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iii. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Bp. Pearson.

While we make such remarks concerning the history of CHRIST's Death, as well as concerning the many striking circumstances of His Passion, let us not fail to remember the spiritual agencies which were besides at work,—urging the enemies of the REDEEMER to words and deeds of unparalleled wickedness<sup>c</sup>; sharpening every torture; and assailing Him by every avenue of Pain. For Satan, who, after the Temptation, departed from the Holy One 'until a season<sup>d</sup>,' beheld that his hour had now at last arrived,—as our SAVIOUR Himself declared<sup>e</sup>. *He* it was who brought about the Crucifixion of CHRIST; vainly expecting that he should triumph over his formidable Enemy if he could succeed in bringing Him into subjection to the Law of Death. The union of the Divine and Human Natures in the one person of CHRIST was a mystery far beyond the wisdom of the Old Serpent; so that, (to quote a favourite expression of the Fathers,) the Cross proved the trap in which he was effectually taken. He perceived not till it was too late,—till, in fact, the Seed of the Woman was about to bruise his head; and the Second Adam, by submitting to Death, overcame Death,—that the Cross was to be the instrument of CHRIST's Triumph, and the scene of His final victory: never else, (as St. Paul in a certain place remarks,) would he and his accursed agents 'have crucified the Lord of Glory'<sup>f</sup>!

<sup>c</sup> See below, on ver. 38.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke iv. 13, where see the note.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke xxii. 53.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 8.

And these remarks, which it is no digression to offer in this place, furnish an explanation of that famous saying of Ignatius, first Bishop of Antioch : " The Prince of this World was baffled by the Virginity of Mary,—by her Child-bearing,—and likewise *by the LORD's Death* : three crying Mysteries which were wrought in the secrecy and silence of God !" The early Fathers were familiar with this thought, of which we find many traces in their writings. See below, the note on ver. 40.

His enemies crucified Him therefore,

and parted His garments, casting lots : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots.

Very surprising is the exactness of this fulfilment of ancient Prophecy. David is found to have written thus in Psalm xxii. 18 ; but the Psalmist cannot have foreseen the issue of his own words : he cannot have known that while the garments of the SAVIOUR would be hereafter divided into four parts by the four soldiers who were appointed to guard His Cross, His seamless coat, (as St. John records,) would be spared ; and lots cast upon it, in order to decide to whom it should belong<sup>s</sup> !

Like every other very momentous transaction in the history of our adorable REDEEMER, the fate

<sup>s</sup> See St. John xix. 23, 24.

of the garments which covered His most sacred Person, is related by all the four Evangelists<sup>b</sup>.

- 36 And sitting down they watched Him there:  
37 and set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

It was customary with the Romans to set a title over the heads of those who were condemned to death. But take notice that the Providence of God, (which overrules all words and actions of men,) caused the SAVIOUR'S accusation, which was meant in bitter ridicule, to convey nothing but the truth. See more in the note on St. Luke xxiii. 38 : see also on St. Matthew xxvi. 65.

- 38 Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Whereby was fulfilled that prophecy of Isaiah, 'and He was numbered with the transgressors;' as St. Mark notes<sup>c</sup>. Concerning the men here called 'thieves,' see the note on St. Luke xxiii. 32.

It has been well remarked that all "the evil designed by the enemy, was turned into the glory of God by CHRIST. In order to ridicule and degrade the Holy One, he suggests to the Jews to place Him between two thieves: it redounded to the highest glory of the Kingdom of Mercy<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark xv. 24: St. Luke xxiii. 34: St. John xix. 23, 24.

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark xv. 28, quoting Is. liii. 12.      <sup>d</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 48.

He instigated them to crucify the REDEEMER: no other death would have so much reached to the fulness,—to the breadth, and length, and depth, and height<sup>1</sup>,—of our misery. The Devil urged Pilate to the scorn and ridicule of that title on the Cross: it is a name written in Heaven, and bears witness to CHRIST's Eternal Kingdom. He urged the people and their rulers to mock Him: but all they said fulfilled prophecy. He instigated them to add to His torments, but it only made His Atonement perfect. And it has passed into a Law for CHRIST's subjects and followers, that the evil designed against them, is by Him made their chief good, if they adhere to Him<sup>m</sup>."

It had been said prophetically "I became a reproach unto them; when they looked upon Me, they shaked their heads<sup>n</sup>." Accordingly it is added:

And they that passed by reviled Him, 39  
wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that 40  
destroyest the Temple, and buildest *it* in  
three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the  
Son of God, come down from the cross.

They revive the accusation which they had already fruitlessly brought against Him<sup>o</sup>,—based upon the Divine saying, recorded in St. John ii. 19; and in challenging our LORD to perform a miracle in proof of His Mission, they shew the

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to Ephes. iii. 18.

<sup>n</sup> *Ps. cix. 25.*

<sup>m</sup> Williams.

<sup>o</sup> See St. Matth. xxvi. 61.

popular expectation that MESSIAH, when He came, would work Miracles. Consider St. John vii. 31. The form which their language assumes, recalls the language addressed to CHRIST by the Tempter<sup>1</sup>. The best of the Fathers, indeed, have not scrupled to assign the speech to *him* on this occasion; instigating his agents to obtain, by whatever means, our LORD's descent from that Cross whereon He was already clearly a Conqueror.

- 11 Likewise also the Chief Priests mocking  
 12 *Him*, with the Scribes and Elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.

They choose their sign; but they have been already warned that they shall be favoured with none, save that of the prophet Jonas<sup>2</sup>. This insult is the echo of what we met with above, in ver. 40: concerning which, see the note on St. Matthew xiv. 29. "He might indeed have come down," (remarks Bp. Pearson,) "and in saving Himself *have never saved us*."—They proceed:

- 13 He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the SON of God.

Had not this also been the subject of express prophecy? "All they that see Me laugh Me to

<sup>1</sup> St. Matth. iv. 3, 6.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matth. xii. 39.

scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him!." "Carnal man," (remarks Bp. Wilson,) "cannot comprehend that God loves those whom He permits to suffer: but Faith teaches us that the Cross is the gift of His love and the foundation of our hope, the mark of His children, and the title of an inheritance in Heaven."

The thieves also, which were crucified 44 with Him, cast the same in His teeth.

They were both blasphemers, at first; but one of the two proved a Confessor in the end, and received a gracious assurance of his acceptance from the lips of CHRIST Himself\*. The Evangelist proceeds to notice the supernatural darkness which from noon till about three o'clock covered the land; and which may well be supposed to have wrought a change in the thoughts of many concerning the Crucified.

Now from the sixth hour there was dark- 45 ness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

This was no *eclipse* of the Sun; for it took place at the Passover Season, when the Moon was at the full. The darkness was altogether supernatural; "an awful token of the withdrawing of the light

\* Psalm xxii. 7, 8: the last words, from the margin.

\* See St. Luke xxiii. 39 to 43, and the notes there.



of God's countenance from the land in which the SON of God was hanging upon the Cross<sup>t</sup>."

- 46 And about the ninth hour JESUS cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Thus did our Blessed SAVIOUR accept the application of the xxii<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, already made by the Chief Priests and Scribes"; quoting the first prophetic words of that Psalm, and acknowledging them to be fulfilled in His own Person. "The Son of David," (says Bp. Pearson), "shews in whose person the father spake it."

He was bereft of Divine Consolation too, on this Day, (says holy Bishop Andrewes,) "and *that* was His most sorrowful complaint of all: not that His friends upon Earth, but that His FATHER from Heaven had forsaken Him: that neither Heaven nor Earth yielded Him any regard; but that between the passioned powers of His soul and whatsoever might any way refresh Him, there was" a barrier set, "and *He* left in the state of a weather-beaten tree, all desolate and forlorn;—evident, too evident, by that His most dreadful cry, which at once moved all the Powers in Heaven and Earth, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—Weigh well that cry; consider it well, and tell me if ever there were cry like that of His.... The Powers of Darkness let loose to afflict Him,—the

<sup>t</sup> Archd. Hale and Bp. Lonsdale.

<sup>v</sup> See above, ver. 42, 43.

influence of Comfort restrained from relieving Him,—never was there sorrow like unto His Sorrow! It cannot be expressed as it should, and as other things may. In silence we may admire it, but all our words will not reach it.”

Some of them that stood there, when 47 they heard *that*, said, This *Man* calleth for Elias.

The words resemble each other, and might easily have been mistaken, especially by those who spake not in the peculiar dialect of the Hebrew which our Blessed SAVIOUR is thought to have used.

“After this, JESUS knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”

And straightway one of them ran, and 48 took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave Him to drink.

Was it not written of old,—“They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink?” For “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”

The rest said, Let be, let us see whether 49 Elias will come to save Him.

For a very general belief prevailed among the ancients, both before the time of our LORD and

\* St. John xix. 28.

‡ Ps. lxix. 21.

† Prov. v. 10.

since, that Elijah was to return in person : a subject which has been already adverted to in the note on St. Matthew xvii. 11 and 12. These wicked brethren of a greater than Joseph, see 'the anguish of His soul<sup>a</sup>,' and add insult to Him who is already in the very depth of Distress : "which barbarous and brutish inhumanity of theirs," (says Bp. Andrewes,) "must needs pierce deeper into His soul, than even did the iron into His side."

- 50 JESUS, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

He said 'It is finished<sup>a</sup>;' and, 'FATHER into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit<sup>b</sup>:' which were the two last of the seven recorded sayings of CHRIST upon the Cross.

As there had been signs in Heaven going before this tremendous event, so were there now signs on the Earth, yea, and under the Earth, following it.

- 51 And, behold, the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom:

Whereby, it is evidently implied, that not only had our SAVIOUR entered into the Holy of Holies, "into Heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us;" but also that the veil was removed by which we were excluded, and that henceforth we might follow Him thither. For we have "bold-

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xlii. 21.    <sup>b</sup> St. John xix. 30.    <sup>c</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 46.

ness," (says the Apostle,) "to enter into the holiest by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the Veil, *that is to say His flesh*."\*

"Nor does it merely signify our admission into Heaven after Death; but also our having access now into the Holy of Holies, through the Blood of CHRIST with which we are sprinkled; for it is in this sense that St. Paul applies it in this passage<sup>d</sup>." It seems to be further implied, that in CHRIST, the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to be done away; that the mysteries of the Law should henceforth be uncovered; and that the Divine Protection which had so long defended the Holy Place from outrage and pollution, was henceforward to be withdrawn.

and the Earth did quake, and the rocks rent: and the graves were opened, 52

"All the Creatures in Heaven and Earth seemed to hear this His mournful complaint, and in their kind to shew their regard of it: the Sun in Heaven shrinking in his light,—the Earth trembling under it,—the very stones cleaving in sunder, as if they had sense and sympathy: sinful Man only not moved with it! And yet it was not for the creatures, this was done to Him; to them it pertaineth not: but for us it was done, and to us it doth pertain. And shall we yet not regard it? Shall the creatures regard it, and not we? If we

\* Heb. x. 20.

<sup>d</sup> Williams.

do not, it may appertain to us, but we do not pertain to it. None pertain to it but they that take benefit by it; and none take benefit by it, (no more than by the brazen Serpent,) but they that fix their eyes on it\*." The graves were opened, and many bodies of the Saints which slept arose,

Marvels attend the SAVIOUR from the Cradle to the Grave. At the loud cry with which He breathed out His human Soul, the Saints of God stir in their shrouds: as if by anticipation of that dreadful hour "when they that are in the graves shall hear the Voice of the SON of GOD, and they that hear shall live†." "We may suppose" (says a pious writer,) "that His dying Voice did penetrate into the furthest regions of the dead; that, together with that Earthquake, all they that were in their graves were moved, and some great change was wrought in their condition: and perhaps by CHRIST Himself, the great atoning Victim, at that moment appearing among the dead and going down to Hell\*." But it is obvious that the Evangelist is anticipating what was of later occurrence when he says that "many bodies of the Saints which slept arose." Those words must in fact be taken with the words which follow:

53 and came out of the graves after His Re-

\* Bp. Andrewes, alluding to Numb. xxi. 8, 9. See also the note on St. Mark xv. 38.

† St. John v. 28.

• Williams.

urrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many.

For it is not to be supposed that any of the saints arose before the King of Saints was risen. CHRIST the first-fruits; afterwards they that are CHRIST'S<sup>g</sup>." But surely it was fitting that He who at this time 'descended into Hell,' and 'preached to the Spirits in safe keeping<sup>h</sup>,' should conduct with Him, when He rose from Death, a kind of first-fruits of those ancient Saints of His who had fallen asleep in His perfect Faith and Fear. Was not the event here recorded a blessed earnest of that 'Resurrection of the Body,' which was to be hereafter, and in which the whole Church professes to 'believe?'

Take notice that guilty Jerusalem is still called the *Holy City*.' Even so we speak of 'the *Holy* Catholic Church,' though it be true that Iniquity abounds therein.

Now when the Centurion, and they that were with him, watching JESUS, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the SON of God.

A very extraordinary confession, surely, on the lips of those who uttered it; and who cannot have known the full meaning of what they said. But they had heard our SAVIOUR claim this wondrous

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 23.

<sup>h</sup> 1 St. Pet. iii. 19.

appellation, and they had seen Him punished for it. They had also witnessed enough to convince them that no title was too lofty for such an one as they had been appointed to guard.

- 55 And many women were there beholding  
afar off, which followed JESUS from Galilee,  
56 ministering unto Him : among which was  
Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of  
James and Joses, and the Mother of Zebe-  
dee's children.

That is, besides Mary of Magdala, there was Mary, (the sister of the Blessed Virgin,) and Salome, the Mother of St. James and St. John.

It was now drawing near the time of Sunset, at which time the Sabbath-day would begin. But the Jewish law forbad that the body of one hung on a tree should hang there all night<sup>b</sup>. Accordingly, it is added :

- 57 When the even was come, there came a  
rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who  
58 also himself was JESUS' disciple : he went to  
Pilate and begged the Body of JESUS. Then  
Pilate commanded the Body to be delivered.

O unspeakable privilege ! He asked for nothing less than the Body of CHRIST : and nothing less than the Body of CHRIST is given him.

- 59 And when Joseph had taken the Body, he

<sup>b</sup> Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it 60  
 in his own new tomb, which he had hewn  
 out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone  
 to the door of the Sepulchre, and departed.

Thus did our SAVIOUR make " His grave with  
 the wicked, and with the rich in His death<sup>i</sup> : " the  
 meaning of which prophecy seems to be, that ' His  
 grave *was appointed* with the wicked,' — that is  
 with the two thieves. Joseph of Arimathæa did  
 not perform this act of piety alone. Nicodemus,  
 another member of the High Court of Sanhedrin,  
 (the same who had at first come to JESUS by  
 night,) waxing bolder and stronger in the Faith,  
 had been his helper<sup>k</sup> : and thus, He who was trans-  
 figured, and crucified, with two,—whose resting  
 place was guarded by two,—and at whose Ascen-  
 sion, two were sent with a message to the Twelve<sup>l</sup>,  
 —the same is now conveyed to His grave in the  
 garden by two, likewise. It was " a sepulchre  
 that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before  
 was laid<sup>m</sup> : " and the circumstance recalls a remark  
 which was offered in the notes on St. Matthew  
 ii. 2, and St. Luke xviii. 39.

And there was Mary Magdalene, and the 61  
 other Mary, sitting over against the Sepul-  
 chre.

That is, Mary the Mother of Joses<sup>n</sup>, mentioned

<sup>i</sup> Is. liii. 9.

<sup>k</sup> St. John xix. 39 to 42, where see the notes.

<sup>l</sup> See the note on St. Luke ix. 30.

<sup>m</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 53.

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark xv. 47.



above in ver. 56. These two seem to have lingered at the sepulchre, as if absorbed in grief. Well may the first named woman have been selected to be the earliest witness of the Resurrection<sup>o</sup>!

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the Chief Priests and  
63 Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that Deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

“Even in death and after death to be called a ‘Deceiver,’ as if no other description could express Thee! Thy humiliations, and wounds, and shame, are not yet over or exhausted, but flow on still even beyond the grave, to the healing of our sick souls, and the strengthening of our weak faith; teaching us that not even in death are we to seek for a good name for ourselves, but that when reviled we shall have Thy shame to cover us<sup>p</sup>.”

But *when* had ‘the faithful and true Witness’ said this thing? *Never in their hearing*, certainly, on any recorded occasion. Had they then obtained the statement from Judas, or from some other of the Twelve? But they say “we remember.” Did they then so well understand the dark sayings of our Lord concerning ‘this Temple,’ and ‘the sign of the Prophet Jonas<sup>q</sup>’ as to venture thus boldly to interpret it?—They proceed:

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark xvi. 9.

<sup>p</sup> Williams.

<sup>q</sup> Rev. iii. 14.

<sup>r</sup> St. John ii. 19.

<sup>s</sup> St. Matth. xii. 39, 40.

Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His Disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first.

That is, The popular delusion concerning CHRIST will thereby become more fatal and hopeless than was before<sup>1</sup>. There is surely something of bitter irony in Pilate's reply :

Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : 65  
by your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. So 66  
they went, and made the Sepulchre sure, rolling the stone, and setting a watch.

They did indeed 'set a watch' or 'guard ;' but is reasonable to suspect that the Evangelist does not here say so. Instead of "setting a watch," should perhaps rather be,—"*with the guard.*" That is, the band of Roman soldiers which at such seasons was placed at the disposal of the chief priests, attended them with the Pharisees when they went to seal the stone of the sepulchre : so that He who in His lifetime was condemned both by Jews and Gentiles, has witnesses of either nation also in His Death. As once before, "a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the sepulchre ; and the King sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose

<sup>1</sup> A proverbial saying, which recurs in St. Matth. xii. 45 and St. Peter ii. 20.

might not be changed concerning Daniel<sup>u</sup>,"—so also is it done now. But lo, a greater than Daniel is here: even He of whom it is written, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt Thou trample under feet<sup>x</sup>."

And now, in exchange for the loving hearts which we lately heard of at the sepulchre of our Blessed REDEEMER, Roman soldiers are keeping guard there: "for if 'Love is strong as Death, Jealousy,' also adds the holy canticle, 'is cruel as the Grave.'<sup>y</sup>" Those afflicted ones had gone sorrowing to their homes: but they were destined to experience the blessed truth that though "weeping may endure for a night," yet "joy cometh in the morning<sup>z</sup>."

## The Prayer.

GRANT, O LORD, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy Blessed SON our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for His merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

<sup>u</sup> Dan. vi. 17.

<sup>x</sup> Ps. xci. 13. Consider Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>y</sup> Williams, quoting Song of Sol. viii. 6.

<sup>z</sup> Ps. xxx. 5.

# A

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER OF

### St. Matthew's Gospel.

- 1 CHRIST'S *Resurrection is declared by an Angel to the women.*  
 9 *He Himself appeareth unto them.* 11 *The high Priests give the soldiers money to say that He was stolen out of His sepulchre.*  
 16 *CHRIST appeareth to His Disciples,* 19 *and sendeth them to baptize and teach all nations.*

THE former Chapter ended with an account of the interment of CHRIST, the sealing of the Sepulchre, and the 'setting a watch.' These are the only recorded events of the last Jewish Sabbath,—on which day CHRIST rested in the grave from the work of Redemption, as 'in the beginning' He had rested on that day from the work of Creation. "The obligation of the Sabbath," (says Dr. Pearson,) "died and was buried with Him; but, in a manner, revived again at His Resurrection. And well might that day, which carried with it a remembrance of deliverance from Egyptian servitude\*, resign all the sanctity or solemnity due to it, when that morning once appeared upon which a far greater Redemption was confirmed."

A stronger reason, therefore, henceforth transferred the obligation of the Sabbath to another

\* Deut. v. 15.

day: "and as there was a change in the year at the coming out of Egypt, by the command of God<sup>b</sup>,—so, at this time of a more eminent deliverance, a change was wrought in the weekly account<sup>c</sup>."

XXVIII. IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

'The other Mary' was 'Mary the mother of James<sup>d</sup> and Joses<sup>e</sup>,' our LORD's cousins: that is, she was wife of Clôpas, and sister to the Blessed Virgin<sup>f</sup>. Joanna<sup>g</sup>, and Salome, (the mother of St. James and St. John,) belonged also to the same company of women who visited the Sepulchre "very early in the morning, the first day of the week, . . . at the rising of the sun,"—as St. Mark says<sup>h</sup>: or rather, as St. Mark *explains*; for the statements of the later Evangelist are often, (as here,) explanatory. Thus, the same blessed Writer will be found to explain that the object of these holy women in coming thus early to the grave was to anoint the dead Body of their LORD,—to bestow upon it *that* customary anointment previous to burial, which, by reason of their haste, Joseph and Nicodemus had not been able to provide; but

<sup>b</sup> Exod. xii. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Bp. Pearson.

<sup>d</sup> St. Mark xvi. 1.

<sup>e</sup> St. Mark xv. 47, compared with ver. 40.

<sup>f</sup> See the note on St. Mark iii. 31.

<sup>g</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 10.

<sup>h</sup> St. Mark xvi. 2.

which nevertheless the Son of Man had not lacked : for, as His own lips had declared, (but probably not in their hearing,) the Sister of Lazarus had already thus anointed His Body<sup>1</sup>.

Take notice that the great event with which the present chapter commences took place on '*the first day of the week.*' CHRIST who is 'the true Light'<sup>k</sup> comes forth on the same day in which He had anciently said—'Let there be Light!' . . . The New Creation<sup>l</sup> begins on the same day as the Old.

It was now, in fact, the beginning of 'the third day,'—and therefore '*after three days,*' according to the well-known sacred method of speech, which it is not necessary here to illustrate by examples. This period is prophetically shadowed out in many an ancient history ; but in none so clearly as in that of Jonah,—to whose fate, as distinctly typical of His own descent into Hell and Resurrection from the dead, our LORD Himself appealed on a famous occasion<sup>m</sup>. The great type in respect of *the Day* on which our SAVIOUR rose, was the waved sheaf in the feast of the first-fruits<sup>n</sup>. The Priest was required to wave that sheaf, (the first-fruits of the Harvest,) before the LORD, 'on the morrow after the Sabbath : ' and all the sheaves of the field became holy by the acceptance of *that* ; 'for if the

<sup>1</sup> See St. Matth. xxvi. 12 : St. Mark xiv. 8 : St. John xii. 7.

<sup>k</sup> St. John i. 9, &c.

<sup>l</sup> See the note on St. Matth. iii. 17 : xxiv. 8 : xxvi. 29. St. John ii. 1, &c.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matth. xii. 40.

<sup>n</sup> Concerning which, see Leviticus xxiii. 10 to 12.

first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy.\* "By which, thus much was foretold and represented,—that as the sheaf was lifted up and waved, so the promised MESSIAS was upon this Day to be lifted up and raised from the dead; or rather, to shake, and lift up, and present Himself to God, and so to be accepted for us all: that so, our dust might be sanctified, our corruption hallowed, our mortality consecrated to eternity†."

But the Evangelist is describing the visit of the women to the Sepulchre on the morning when the great antitype of the wave-sheaf was revealed:

- 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the Angel of the LORD descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon  
3 it. His countenance was like lightning, and  
4 his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

This is, of course, the account of what took place shortly before the women arrived,—the description of what had terrified the soldiers who, (as the concluding verses of the former chapter explain,) were set to guard our LORD's Sepulchre. And well may such a spectacle have inspired them with terror. The men were already possessed with a sense of misgiving as to the awful nature of Him who slept

\* Rom. xi. 16.

† Bp. Pearson.

thin ; for they had probably been witnesses of His crucifixion. But the descent from Heaven of such glorious being as the Evangelist describes, must have surpassed all expectation. The bright aspect, and the robe of dazzling white, we meet with on other occasions<sup>q</sup>, as belonging to visitants from the unseen World. With the feat of 'power and might' performed by this angelic being<sup>r</sup>, compare what is related, (and in very similar language too,) of Jacob,—in Genesis xxix. 10.

Take notice that the descent of the Angel is not to be regarded as the signal, or the instrument, of our Lord's awaking : much less is the rolling back the stone from the mouth of the Sepulchre to be looked upon as an act intended to assist our Lord's coming forth, on His waking from death. He was already risen before the Angel came. He had raised Himself<sup>s</sup> ; with calm majesty, had divested Himself of the linen clothes in which Joseph and Nicodemus had wound His lifeless Body<sup>t</sup> ; and had come forth. But it was in order to make the Resurrection known alike to friends and foes that an angel was sent on this glorious errand.—CHRIST *raised Himself* from Death, according to His own express prediction<sup>u</sup> : for 'the union of the two natures (the Divine and Human) still remained ; or was the Soul or the Body of CHRIST separated from the Divinity ; but still subsisted as they did

<sup>q</sup> Compare Dan. x. 6 : and see the note on St. Luke ix. 29.

<sup>r</sup> 2 St. Pet. ii. 11.

<sup>s</sup> St. John ii. 19, 21.

<sup>t</sup> Compare St. John xx. 6, 7, and xix. 40. <sup>u</sup> St. John ii. 19, 21.



before, by the subsistence of the Second Person of the Trinity\*.

The women then, on reaching the Sepulchre, found the place unguarded; and the stone rolled away from the door. They therefore drew near with wonder, in order to discover what had become of the Body of their LORD.

- 5 And the Angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek JESUS, which was crucified.

‘Fear not *ye*,’ it is said with marked emphasis. Let the soldiers ‘shake, and become as dead men’ through fear; but ‘fear not *ye*.’ It is worth observing how eager the Holy Angels ever shew themselves to comfort the timid hearts of faithful mortals. See the places referred to below†.

- 6 He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the LORD lay.

‘As He said,’—on so many occasions\*: but the chief occasion which the Angel referred to is found in St. Matthew xvii. 23; where see the note. This appears from St. Luke’s Gospel, where it is added, —“Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again\*.”

\* Bp. Pearson.

† Judges vi. 23. Dan. x. 12, 19. St. Luke i. 13, 30: ii. 10. Acts xxvii. 24. Compare Rev. i. 17.

\* As St. Matth. xii. 40: xvi. 21: xx. 19.

\* St. Luke xxiv. 6, 7.

The Angel was not sitting on the stone when he spoke these words, as many persons imagine. He was within the Sepulchre. There were in fact "*two* men in shining garments<sup>b</sup>," who had stationed themselves, (like the Cherubim on the Mercy-seat,) "the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the Body of JESUS had lain<sup>c</sup>." St. Matthew may be thought to record the address of the principal Speaker; the same, doubtless, of whom we heard in verses 2 to 4. St. Mark says that he was "a young man, sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment<sup>d</sup>." He continues to address the astonished women in the words which follow:

And go quickly, and tell His Disciples <sup>7</sup> that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.

Concerning the appearance in Galilee, foretold by CHRIST<sup>e</sup>,—announced here by an Angel,—and presently promised by Himself<sup>f</sup>—see below the note on ver. 16.

And they departed quickly from the <sup>8</sup> sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His Disciples word.

"Since Death began from the female sex, to *her* first is given the seeing and announcing the glory

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 4.

<sup>c</sup> St. John xx. 12.

<sup>d</sup> St. Mark xvi. 5.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matth. xxvi. 32.

<sup>f</sup> See below, ver. 10.

of the Resurrection<sup>g</sup>.” “Woman, who came before like an evil Angel to Man, now returns to him even as an Angel of good<sup>h</sup>.”

St. Mark says that, “when JESUS was risen early, the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils<sup>i</sup>.” This then was His first appearance after His Resurrection. His second recorded appearance follows. But the exact order in which the subsequent appearances of the risen SAVIOUR took place, (for ten, in all, are recorded;) and how the course of events on this, the most eventful Morning in the World’s History, may most satisfactorily be adjusted,—we shall not here attempt to ascertain. Such inquiries, however delightful and important, (as how can the attention be possibly given to a worthier subject?) cannot be conducted without a minute discussion of difficulties, and a lengthy examination of existing opinions, which would be altogether out of place in a Commentary like the present.

“I love them that love Me,” saith the LORD by His prophet; “and those that seek Me early shall find Me<sup>j</sup>.” It proved so now; for it is added,

- 9 And as they went to tell His Disciples, behold, JESUS met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.

<sup>g</sup> Hilary.

<sup>i</sup> St. Mark xvi. 9: where see the note.

<sup>h</sup> Williams.

<sup>j</sup> Prov. viii. 17.

'Thus their obedience to the LORD of the Sabbath, which had kept them till now at their homes, brought about that, instead of embalming a dead body, they should embrace a living one<sup>k</sup>:' as the SPIRIT had said prophetically long before,— 'I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go<sup>l</sup>.' It will be observed that our LORD permitted, in the case of the company of Women, the act of love and homage which He had already forbidden in the case of Mary Magdalene, saying 'Touch Me not:' the meaning of which mysterious words will be found assigned in the note on St. John xx. 17.

Then said JESUS unto them, Be not afraid: 10 go tell My Brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.

See above, on ver. 7; and below, on ver. 16. By His 'Brethren,' in this place, our LORD cannot mean exclusively His Kinsmen after the flesh; for we find that the Women carried the message to the Disciples, generally<sup>m</sup>. It is probable that He speaks of the little band of Believers, under this endearing name,— being Himself 'the firstborn among many Brethren\*.'

Now when they were going, behold, some 11 of the watch came into the City, and shewed unto the chief Priests all the things that were done.

<sup>k</sup> Williams.

<sup>m</sup> See St. Luke xxiv. 9, 10.

<sup>l</sup> Song of Sol. iii. 4.

\* Rom. viii. 29.

It seems then that what induced the guard to take this step was the visit of the women. The soldiers had ascertained that *He* was departed, whose sepulchre they had been set to watch: they had already seen His female followers make their appearance at 'the place where the LORD lay;' indeed, the women were even now running towards Jerusalem with the news that CHRIST had risen from the dead. It was manifest that no time was to be lost: accordingly, '*while [the women] were going*, behold, some of the guard' hastened into the city; and thus were the first to bring thither the unwelcome tidings of what had so recently occurred: unless indeed, (which seems very likely,) those bodies of the Saints, (whose rising was related in the preceding chapter,) had already 'gone into the Holy City, and appeared unto many<sup>a</sup>.' It happened therefore that the very mischance which the high Priests had rendered *impossible* by setting a guard, they were obliged to bribe the soldiers to declare had actually taken place<sup>b</sup>! And why? Because they had to do with Him who 'taketh the wise in their own craftiness<sup>c</sup>;' and by whose SPIRIT it had been said prophetically,—'they have digged a pit before Me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves<sup>d</sup>.'

## 12 And when they were assembled with the

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xxvii. 53: where see the note.

<sup>b</sup> Compare St. Matth. xxvii. 64, with ver. 13 of the present chapter.

<sup>c</sup> Job v. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Ps. lvii. 6.

elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say 13 ye, His Disciples came by night, and stole Him *away* while we slept. And if this come 14 to the Governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

So much then for the supposed value of *evidences*, (as they are called,) for the truth of the Gospel. Could more unexceptionable witnesses of the Resurrection than these, have been imagined? Yet we see how their testimony was treated. Their words wrought no conviction: nay, they caused men to harden their hearts the more. Those wicked Rulers who heard not Moses and the Prophets, would not be persuaded (according to our LORD's true prophecy,) 'though One rose from the dead'.—Of the soldiers meantime it is recorded,—

So they took the money, and did as they 15 were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The Evangelist now proceeds with the narrative which was suspended at ver. 8: but he passes over a considerable interval of time. How much, cannot indeed be certainly ascertained; but it was more than seven days, and less than forty.

Then the eleven Disciples went away into 16

\* St. Luke xvi. 31.

Galilee, into a mountain where JESUS had appointed them.

It is quite remarkable what a prominent place the appearance of our LORD to His Disciples, in Galilee, occupies in St. Matthew's Gospel. It is recorded as the great event, — almost the only event, — after the Resurrection. Nothing else is said concerning the mysterious forty Days which followed the first Easter. The very Ascension of our LORD into Heaven does not obtain the slightest notice. On the other hand, the Angel in the Sepulchre said, 'Behold, He goeth before you *into Galilee*; there shall ye see Him<sup>a</sup>:' — our SAVIOUR repeated the same assurance shortly after, — 'Go tell My Brethren that they go *into Galilee*, and there shall they see Me<sup>t</sup>:' — and the sacred narrative hastens on to relate that 'then the eleven Disciples went away *into Galilee*, into a mountain where JESUS had appointed them.' In fact this meeting, which was of our LORD's express appointment, must be regarded as an event of unusual dignity and importance; having been the subject of distinct prophecy<sup>a</sup>, — as indeed it was the *only* appearance which our SAVIOUR is recorded to have foretold.

"Here therefore He is now, with His glorified Body, where He had been so often in His Humiliation. It would seem to indicate that human sympathies and natural attachments were still

<sup>a</sup> See above, ver. 7.

<sup>t</sup> See above, ver. 10.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xxvi. 32.

isting in the condescensions of our risen LORD. is as if He took to Himself and hallowed such natural sympathies of humanity. As, in St. John's Gospel, He is found at the accustomed Lake with few chosen Disciples\*, so is He now among the mountains, where He had so often been with them before; and with the people, as before, gathered round Him and them†." For it cannot be doubted that this was that appearance to 'above seven hundred brethren at once,' of which the Apostle Paul speaks in a well-known place‡.

*Which* Mountain this was, is not known; neither can it be declared *when* our Blessed LORD appointed it to the Disciples as the place where He would meet them. A promise that, after His resurrection, He would go before His little flock into Galilee, we have indeed lately met with\*; and when He made that promise, He may have so fixed the actual scene of their future meeting: the Angel who addressed the women in the sepulchre, may have spoken more words than are recorded in ver. 7 above, and have designated the exact locality where it was the will of their risen LORD to manifest Himself to their longing eyes. The entire transaction however, (as already observed,) evidently belongs to a period much subsequent to the Day of the Resurrection.

And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him : but some doubted.

\* St. John xxi. 1, &c.

† Williams.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

• St. Matth. xxvi. 32.



Not some of the 'eleven Disciples,' of course. Of *them*, it is expressly recorded that 'when they saw Him, *they worshipped Him.*' The last words of the verse should in fact rather be translated 'but *others* doubted;' others, namely, of those five hundred brethren, and upwards, who were doubtless present on this occasion <sup>b</sup>.

- 18 And JESUS came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in Earth.

"The first of the sayings of the great forty days, is that which asserts the Royalty of our Blessed LORD Himself. It is the first in place, for it occurs as the first in the first of the Evangelists; and it is the first also in its own proper order and meaning: for, from the Royalty of CHRIST, the existence of the Church, with all her powers, privileges, and hopes, is directly derived. As a King, He founded His Kingdom: as a King, He commissioned His Ministers: as a King, He laid out the limits and constitution of His Kingdom, according to His own will. . . . Let it, then, be observed, that this Royalty is first fully given in the Resurrection: 'And JESUS came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in Earth \*.'"

Thus was the prophecy of Daniel fulfilled, that there should 'be given Him Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and lan-

<sup>b</sup> See 1 Cor. xv. 6: referred to above, in the note on ver. 16.

\* Moberly.

guages, should serve Him<sup>c</sup>.' All that Satan had once offered Him on the condition of sinful compliance<sup>d</sup>, was now His own *by right*,—a part only of His great 'inheritance<sup>e</sup>;' and which He surveys, as at the Temptation He did, from 'a Mountain:'—and yet, *not* (as it would appear) from the mountain in Galilee.

"All power is *given* unto Me,"—saith our SAVIOUR CHRIST. "Now, a dominion thus imparted, given, derived, or bestowed, cannot be that which belongeth unto God, as God, founded in the Divine Nature; because whatsoever is such, is absolute and independent. Wherefore His Lordship thus imparted or acquired appertaineth to the Human Nature, and belongeth to our SAVIOUR as the Son of Man. . . . This dominion thus given unto CHRIST in His Human Nature was a direct and plenary power over all things; but was not actually given Him at once, but part while He lived on Earth, part after His Death and Resurrection. For though it be true that 'JESUS knew,' before His death, 'that the FATHER had given all things into His Hands;' yet it is observable that in the same place it is written, that He likewise knew 'that He was come from God, and went to God:' and part of that power He received when He came from God,—with part He was invested when He went to God: the first, to enable Him,—the second, not only so, but also to reward Him.

<sup>c</sup> Dan. vii. 14.

<sup>d</sup> See St. Matth. iv. 8, 9.

<sup>e</sup> Consider Ps. ii. 8: St. John iii. 35: Rom. viii. 17: Heb. i. 2.

‘For to this end CHRIST both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be LORD both of the dead and living<sup>f</sup>.’ After His Resurrection, He said to His Disciples, ‘All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in Earth.’ ‘He drank of the brook in the way, therefore He hath lift up His Head<sup>g</sup>.’ Because, ‘He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every Name<sup>h</sup>.’”

By virtue of this entire authority, therefore, which He was at liberty to delegate how, and when, and to whomsoever He would, the Holy One proceeds to give to His Eleven Apostles their great Charge and Commission :—

- 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST :

Rather,—“and make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them.” In which words, the largeness of the Apostles’ Commission is first to be observed,—not confined, as formerly to ‘the lost sheep of the House of Israel<sup>i</sup>,’ but wide as the World.

Next, the necessity of Holy Baptism in order to becoming CHRIST’s Disciple, and therefore to Salvation, is to be noticed, as clearly implied in the very terms of our LORD’s Commission to His Apo-

<sup>f</sup> Rom. xiv. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Ps. cx. 7.

<sup>h</sup> Phil. ii. 8, 9. See also Ephes. i. 20, 21. The quotation is from Bp. Pearson.

<sup>i</sup> St. Matth. x. 5, 6.

stles. That the Baptism of Infants no less than that of Adults was intended by the Divine Speaker, is abundantly plain from the testimony of Scripture and of Antiquity: but a convincing argument is supplied by the established usage of the Jews themselves with respect to children. It is a striking fact that the Baptism of Infants no less than of full-grown proselytes, was constantly practised. Our LORD made no express mention of Infants therefore, when He charged the Apostles to make Disciples by Baptism; because express mention was superfluous in the case of the persons whom He was addressing.

“From this sacred form of Baptism,” (says Bp. Pearson,) “did the Church derive the Rule of Faith; requiring the profession of belief in the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST,—before any could be baptized in their Name.”

It might indeed be thought by unlearned persons, from the frequent mention (in the Acts) of baptizing ‘*in the name of the LORD JESUS<sup>k</sup>*,’ that the form of words prescribed by our SAVIOUR was not invariably observed by His Apostles. But besides that the testimony of all Antiquity establishes the direct contrary of this, it is observable from the very tenor of Scripture itself that it must be a mistake to entertain such an opinion. When the disciples of Ephesus, in reply to St. Paul’s inquiry — ‘Have ye received the HOLY GHOST since ye believed?’ made answer ‘We have

<sup>k</sup> See Acts ii. 38 : viii. 16 : x. 48 : xix. 5.

not so much as heard whether there be any HOLY GHOST,' the Apostle is found straightway to have rejoined — 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' "intimating," (as the learned writer last quoted, remarks,) "that if they were baptized according to the rule of CHRIST, they could not be ignorant that there is an HOLY GHOST;" since they must perforce have been baptized into His Name. They made answer,— 'Unto John's Baptism.' Whereupon, it is straightway added,— 'they were baptized *in the name of the LORD JESUS*<sup>1</sup>.'

"The power of governing the Church which our LORD left with His Apostles and their successors, to the end of the World, (but so that He, according to His promise, is always present with them at the execution of it,)—follows: for here, our LORD gives commission not only to baptize, but likewise to teach those who are His Disciples, to observe whatsoever He had commanded. Whereby the persons whom He addressed, and their successors after them, are empowered both to declare what are those commands of CHRIST which men ought to observe,—and also to use all means to prevail on men to observe them<sup>m</sup>."

20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you :

All nations therefore are to be made Disciples of CHRIST. 'And this is to be done in two ways; first, by baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 1 to 5.

<sup>m</sup> Beveridge.

the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, and so bringing them into the Church; secondly, by teaching them to observe all things whatsoever CHRIST hath commanded: that so they may be His Disciples indeed; and not only outwardly profess the Faith which He hath taught, but likewise sincerely obey all the commands which He hath enjoined<sup>a</sup>.

It may be presumed therefore that our LORD,—specially during those great forty days, during which He is said to have ‘spoken of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of GOD,’—gave commandment to His Apostles concerning the future constitution, government, and instruction of His Church; and to these commands He may be thought here particularly to allude. Such a rite as Confirmation, He may be thought to have now ordained,—which we find presently enjoying Apostolic sanction<sup>b</sup>. Such an institution as the Holy Order of Deacons, He may be thought to have now appointed, which is observed immediately afterwards to arise<sup>c</sup>. Those Doctrines and Divine Truths He may be thought to have now set forth, which the Apostolical Epistles lay down, and enforce, and explain.

But of what avail was this great Commission, unless power and authority were at the same time given which should enable those who were sent, to fulfil their errand? ‘Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the

<sup>a</sup> Beveridge.    <sup>b</sup> Acts i. 3.    <sup>c</sup> Acts viii. 5 to 17: xix. 1 to 6.  
Consider also Heb. vi. 1, 2.                      <sup>d</sup> Acts vi. 1 to 6.

children of Israel out of Egypt? was the remembrance of Moses of old: "and therefore, as God answered Moses, saying, 'Certainly I will be with thee';" so does our SAVIOUR here encourage His Apostles, adding,"

and lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the World. Amen.

He says 'Lo!'—for every word which follows is weighty and important. 'I,' the Eternal Son, —who have all power in Heaven and Earth committed to Me,—'*I am with you.*' Not, '*I will be with you;*' but '*I am with you:*' reminding them thereby of His Divine Essence and Power, to which all things are present. And therefore, as He elsewhere said, 'Before Abraham was, I AM,' so here He says, 'I am with you at all times, to the end of the World, as really as at this present':—which last words were added, "lest, when the inspired Apostles died, their imperfect and uninspired successors should, in the midst of the strife of worldly tongues, and the abundance of sin, be tempted to doubt whether the mysterious delegation, with all its sacred powers, were continued to them†."

Thus speaks our Emmanuel, that is, 'God with us;' (for He hath 'dwelt *among us*;' and when He departed from the Earth, He said to His Disciples that He would be *with them* for ever:)—

\* Exod. iii. 11.    \* Exod. iii. 12: iv. 12, 15, &c.    † Beveridge.

‡ St. John viii. 58.

§ From Bp. Beveridge.

† Moberly.

‡ See the note on St. John i. 14.

thus does He promise to abide eternally with His Church. On a former occasion, to St. Peter, He sealed His speech concerning that Church with a powerful promise,—namely, that ‘the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it<sup>a</sup>.’ On this occasion, He adds a promise to the like effect,—‘And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World.’ “The former of these promises assures us of the continuance of the Church because it is built upon a Rock<sup>a</sup>: the latter, giveth not only an assurance of the continuance of the Church, but also the cause of that continuance, which is the presence of CHRIST<sup>b</sup>.”

“In short, our SAVIOUR here promises His Apostles that He will be always with them to the end of the World, by His HOLY SPIRIT accompanying and assisting them in the discharge of their Apostolical Office: . . . . which amounts to nothing less than this; even that CHRIST, having constituted such an office in His Church for the government and edification of it to the end of the World, here promiseth that He Himself, by His HOLY SPIRIT, will be always present at the execution of that office, so as to make it effectual to the great ends and purposes for which it was designed<sup>c</sup>.”

Such is, doubtless, the primary purport and intention of our SAVIOUR's promise. It was addressed to those whom He set over His Family and Household; and is the Charter of all their

<sup>a</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 18.

<sup>a</sup> See the note on St. Matth. vii. 25.

<sup>b</sup> *Bp. Pearson.*

<sup>c</sup> *Beveridge.*



successors for ever. This promise gives them Confidence as well as Authority. In the Name of CHRIST, they act; and their acts are valid because they are done in, and through, and by Him. . . . At the same time, these words are in another and inferior, but still in a real sense, the common property of every member of that Society, and will remain so, 'even unto the end of the World.' The Blessed Speaker says more than that He is with us 'always:' in the text, He declares that He is with us 'every day,'—or rather '*all [our] days:*' by which words the gracious assurance seems to be conveyed that the Holy One and True will be the support and strength, alike of shepherd and of sheep, in all those many unforeseen trials to which '*the days* of the years of man's life' are exposed: those cares of which St. Paul speaks, and of which he felt the weighty burden, because (as he confesses) they came upon him *daily*<sup>d</sup>:—those petty trials and private griefs again, which are the common heritage of all; and which, though little in themselves, yet become great, because, according to our LORD's true prediction, they are of *daily* occurrence<sup>e</sup>.

And this promise, as it is the ground of all a Christian's confidence in Life, so is it the very rod and staff of his soul, in the hour of Death likewise. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death," (says the Psalmist,) "I will fear no evil,—for *Thou art with me* <sup>f</sup>!"

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 28.<sup>e</sup> St. Luke ix. 23.<sup>f</sup> Ps. xxiii. 4.

'CHRIST promised His presence to the Apostles until the end of the World : ' *who* ever made so happy a construction as to infer from thence, that for ever after, He would be absent from them ?" Assuredly, not only during these the years of their Warfare, but hereafter also, when they shall wear crowns in Heaven, it will be the bliss of the Saints to be 'all their days' in the presence of their LORD : to exchange the assurance that *He* is with *them*, for the blessed consciousness that *they* are with *Him* : to behold His face, and to "see the King in His Beauty <sup>h</sup>." "Thou wilt shew me the path of Life : in Thy presence is the fulness of joy ; and at Thy right Hand there is pleasure for evermore <sup>i</sup>."

Bp. Pearson,—referring to St. Matth. i. 25, where see the note.  
Is. xxxiii. 17.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. xvi. 11.

## The Prayer.

**G**RANT, we beseech Thee, **ALMIGHTY**  
that like as we do believe Thy on-  
gotten **SON** our **LORD JESUS CHRIST** to  
ascended into the heavens ; so we may  
in heart and mind thither ascend, and  
Him continually dwell, who liveth and  
eth with Thee and the **HOLY GHOST**  
God, world without end. Amen.













